

**TEN COMPLETE STORIES.**

**THE**

**BILLIARDS BY MELBOURNE INMAN.**

**THE ART OF COLIN HUNTER, A.R.A.**

# WINDSOR

## MAGAZINE



**Vol. 36 OCTOBER 1912 No. 214**

**LONDON·WARD·LOCK & CO·LTD  
MELBOURNE AND TORONTO**

**PRICE·SIXPENCE**



## Stories from The Windsor, Part 1

The Locked Book of Humphrey Gardom by R. Murray Gilchrist  
- July 1895

A Scientific Balloon by W. L. Alden - January 1896

At the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls by Charles J. Mansford -  
April 1896

Titmouse: A Fairy Tale by Fanny Railton - December 1896

The Ghosts of Nether Talkington by Henry A. Hering -  
April 1897

No Fairies? by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (poem) - May 1897

The Wishing-Tree by E. Nesbit - June 1897

The Aerial Brickfield by John Mills - June 1897

Portrait and critical notice of Robert W. Chambers - July 1897

The Little Sexton by Robert W. Chambers (prose poem) -  
July 1897

A Glimpse of Dreamland (illustration) - September 1897

The Oldest Worship in the World: A Restoration by Cutcliffe  
Hyne - November 1897

The Ghost's Double by L. F. Austin - December 1897

Silas P. Cornu's Dry Calculator by Henry A. Hering -  
January 1898

A Tale of Two Spectres by George Haw - November 1899

The New House That Jack Built by Anonymous (poem) -  
January 1900

The Ghost of Eugene Aram by Henry A. Hering - February 1900

Within an Ace of the End of the World by Robert Barr -  
December 1900

Miracle Joyeux by Frank Norris - May 1901

The Ghost of Old John Hill by E. Phillips Oppenheim -  
December 1901

A Secret of the South Pole by Hamilton Drummond - April 1902

- Professor Ahlborne, Collector by Hamilton Drummond -  
May 1902
- The Vanished Prime Minister by Henry A. Hering -  
January 1902
- The Dormer Window by Fred M. White - August 1902
- Unsolved by Ian Maclaren - December 1902 to May 1903
- No. I.—The Clash of Dishes
- No. II.—An Unhistorical Tragedy
- No. III.—An Unseen Presence
- No. IV.—The Spirit of the Place
- No. V.—Ghostly Counsel
- No. VI.—The Hand on the Blind
- Frictional Electricity by Max Adeler - December 1902
- The Discovery of London by G. H. Boden - February 1903



# THE LOCKED BOOK OF HUMPHREY GARDOM.

By R. MURRAY GILCHRIST.



HE summit of Lord's Tor was cleft by a gully, through which ran an ancient road of sand and weather-worn stone. The grassy banks that were unbroken by any cross-path were bright with purple gentian and starry shepherd's flax. This road, which seemed to cut the great hill in two, was the boundary line of the moorland, northward was only heath and rock, besprinkled here and there with desecrated burrows and haunted by grouse and fern-owls and curlews; whilst southward lay half-cultivated fields in which the bilberry bush grew profusely.

Humphrey Gardom's homestead stood on the highest peak. The four windows of a chamber that stood higher than the rest commanded the points of the compass. It was known as the "Beacon House," and its occupants in past centuries had played an important part in the history of the country-folk, for Lord's Tor commanded the finest stretch of country in Derbyshire. In one direction the skyline was abruptly cut against a far distant edge, serrated and terrible; in another was a valley that ran to the heart of the Peak—a valley exquisite in its gradations of mist and shadow; in a third the earth was scooped into an immense basin, fretted everywhere with limestone walls, and almost treeless save where shaded hamlets nestled on hillocks that relieved the smooth surface. But the east was the most beautiful, for there was a dale of wood and water, with a broken castle crowning the horizon and a palace lying in an open park. Humphrey called this palace the "House Iridescent," for in its garden there played winter and summer a wondrously tall fountain, and when sun and wind dallied the spray was drawn across the whole front and made into a dancing rainbow.

The "Beacon House," with its small farm, had been the property of Humphrey's family since the time of Elizabeth, and now the old man was beginning to grow feeble, but his delight in the moorland and the valleys only increased with his weakness. All his life he had been a poet—not a poet who craves men's approbation, but one who

was constrained to write down his passing moods for his own joy, just as the lark that sings ere dawn when none may hear.

In the huge locked book of his verse he had imprisoned the sun and the moon, the winds and the patter of summer rain and the fall of the snow, the fairy pictures on the marsh ice, the movement of the green rush-tips, the heather in flower, the quivering lattice beneath his own light-stricken birches, the thin wiry grass of the hilltops, the plover cry—all that he loved best. And these things were but the symbols of a passion that had never been gratified, but yet had bestowed upon his life great sweetness and strength. He had never felt the least desire to pass beyond the boundary of the horizon, and all that he knew of the world of cities was derived from his books. He had often conceived quaint fancies about this outer world, had likened it to the ant-hills which he disturbed so that he might see the white eggs borne away to a more secret chamber, or to the corruption that lies within a month-dead bird. He could not realise health of brain and body apart from the country.

There was a housekeeper at the "Beacon House," a foster sister—his mother had died in childbed—who was full of curious conceits and superstitions. She was small and stout, and had the cheeks of a codling, russet and wrinkled and round. A cap of white bone lace framed her face, and her teeth were still white and shining. On fine days she made him lean on her arm, and took him to a sunny nook and sat in silence until he spoke of returning. But of late much of this enjoyment had been forbidden, for more than once, so intense had been his susceptibility to the motion of the wind and the blaze of the sun, that he had lost consciousness.

And always the nook chosen faced the "House Iridescent." and Lizbeth, the housekeeper, observed that whenever weakness had overcome him the fountain had scattered its ragged veil between the façade and the garden wall.

On the last day of July, when the heather was oppressingly sweet, and the scent of drying hay filled the air, he craved to be



taken to his favourite viewpoint, and carried with him his book of verses. Lizbeth knew he wished to be alone, and as he seemed somewhat stronger, she left him and went back to the house. When she had gone he opened his book, and gazed wistfully over the distance to the park, in whose topmost wood stood a hunting-tower, whence the dames of olden time had watched the chase. From its highest pinnacle fluttered a red ensign, and he knew that the mistress of "The House Iridescent" was at home.

He opened his book and began to read in a thin, melancholy voice. It was one of the things he had written fifty years ago, when he had just crossed the border of childhood. It was full of stilted sweetness.

"I know not what influence drew me to her place; but the wind was high, and plovers dashed about, calling wildly. Perchance it was the smell of the firs borne over the dividing eight miles of hill and valley.

"I rough-saddled my galloway and rode on and on in a dream, until I reached her park, and there I plunged into the thicket . . . I heard the sound of her voice joined to the wind-cry; stealthily I dismounted, tied the bridle to a withered branch, and hurried onward. All the swaying firs were casting their pollen; I saw her most exquisite beauty through a shower of gold. Her song ceased and she turned upon me and smiled in the way that the daughters of the sun smile, and though she passed from my sight, I remained there till darkness came: It was as if I had entered a too-sacred temple, and the affronted goddess had deprived me of the power of motion."

As Humphrey read this he seemed to grow young again: his withered cheeks filled out, and a soft colour rose; his eyes sparkled, his lips grew firm. This vision of her loveliness had reached him at a critical period; it had redeemed him from a slough of despond, it was his first true glimpse of the higher poetry.

The story of their second meeting was told in a letter that had never been sent. It was written on a great sheet of vellum, which was folded in its place midway in the volume. The margin was covered with the dried petals of many sweet-smelling flowers. It was endorsed "To my Dame of Destiny."

"Madam and Mistress,—It behoves me to write to tell you that once again we have met, and that to-day held a keener joy than my whole life. Hearing that my lord was dead I sorrowed bitterly, because of your

woe, for I know that your love for him exceeded the love of most wives; and in the expectation that my lord would lie in state for the country to see, I left my house and travelled to 'The House Iridescent.' And at the gate was one whom I had helped in youth, and who now serves you as porter, and I drew him aside, and entreated to see my lord in private. He took me to an old French garden where stood leaden terminal statues, laced together with vines, wherefrom swayed purple fruit. In the centre stood god Pan, blowing with cracked cheeks into his reeds. From the open doors of the orange-house crept subtly conflicting odours; in the wall-niches white satyrs' heads spirted water from eyes and mouths into agate basins. All around were roses, white and yellow and red; wasps were revelling on the trickling slabs of the *jetteaux*.

"Your man came at last and led me from chamber to chamber, all redolent with sandal-wood and cedar, and gorgeous with ancient pictures, and down a great stone staircase to the chapel where the dead spouse lay. The last cluster of village women was departing: I noted how each touched his forehead with her left hand so that she might not dream. The silk mort-cloth covered him from head to foot; over his face was spread a kerchief of lace which you had wrought in your maidenhood.

"The aromatic herbs concealed all odour of death: he might have been lying upon his marriage bed. And vivid pictures of your love sprang before me, and—without considering the wrong—when the kerchief was removed I stooped and kissed his mouth, understanding, in some wise, that I had kissed your own.

"Dear one, if this confession anger you, pardon me, for with all my heart and soul I love you. If you bade me for your happiness destroy my life I would not hesitate. Yet, fool that I am, my mistress will never see this letter: it will die with me!"

After that kiss Humphrey's lyrics were interwoven with cords of strong passion. It had been given on his entry into middle age, and though his genius was ever but little tempered with the sensuous, yet the descriptions of the lady's beauty now became rich in the extreme. It was no longer as to a leman that he wrote; but as to a wife who had shared all the mental tumults of his life. Together they had heard the chimes at midnight; together they had drunk of the sadness of the dark and the gladness of the dawn.



So year after year had crept on, and both had grown very old. None the less those songs were still sung, and, though Humphrey knew it not, each new song was sweeter than the last. The old man often woke in the night filled with lyric passion, and rose, to write by the unblinded window.

In short, the book was one such as the world had never known. In it were dewy

Whilst sitting there the prescience of death filled him and he longed to look again upon the lady's face. Such was his desire that he forgot everything else, but sat gazing at the distant palace, and praying that something might tell her all. Throughout the night he lay awake, and when Lizbeth came to him in the morning she found him haggard and restless.



"Sat gazing at the distant palace, and praying that something might tell her all."

youth, hot manhood, pure age; and the age was loveliest. It was the life-story of a great poet to whom the world had offered no temptation: there was no page that would not give joy.

At last came a day when Humphrey felt that the end was very near. He had sat on the hillock beside the rust-eaten framework of the old beacon, and "The House Iridescent" quivered as if beheld through deep water. A north-east wind had caught the fountain and driven it back on the hill where the hunting-tower stood.

"I have a great thing to ask of you, my sister," he said. "You will believe me mad but I am not mad."

"Whatever 'tis," she replied, catching her breath. "If it be even to meet demons I will do 't."

He smiled wanly. "I want nothing as painful as that," he said. "It is only to travel to 'The House Iridescent' and deliver my locked book to the duchess."

She consented, and at his bidding brought his desk, and he wrote a letter.

"MADAM,—I, who have watched you from



afar and have loved you all my life, entreat you to peruse this volume, for all therein tells of you. And if by such fortune I have writ aught therein that can wound, I entreat you consider it but a fault of expression. I cannot live much longer, madam; I would fain have one word from you."

So Lizbeth dressed him, and after setting the house in order, took the book and wrapped it in the shawl of crimson silk interwoven with golden flowers that his mother had worn on her wedding day. She was much stronger than he, and the eight miles of bypaths scarce wearied her. It was late in the afternoon when she reached the garden of "The House Iridescent." For many years the place had been ill-kept, for the duchess, having no children, and caring but little for the duties of her rank, had given up most of her money to the heirs. But the garden was lovelier than ever, and though most of the niche-fountains had ceased to flow, the great one was still resplendent.



"It was late in the afternoon when she reached the garden."

Lizbeth was shown to a room where the lady sat amidst embroideries faded and old as herself, and eastern woods and excess of pale flowers. She was supremely dainty, and still beautiful, and her hair was soft and white as snow.

She opened Humphrey's letter, and her heart began to beat quickly. When she had read it she rested her chin in her palm and fell a-musing; but soon she remembered Lizbeth, and made her eat at her own table. Then, not daring to open the book in the presence of another, and seeing that the old woman wished to go, she ordered a carriage to be got ready, and sent her home with word that on the morrow she herself would come to the Beacon House.

She unlocked the book with some fear; for she understood that something sacred lay within its covers. She began to read, and at first the weight of its beauty overpowered her; but soon it was as if her youth had come back, and lifting the book to her breast she sat like one who nurses a firstborn. There was a long gallery where the portraits of her forefathers and the landscips of the Italian masters lowered from the walls, and at the edge of dark she bade her folk light the candles, and paced to and fro there all the night.

When the last page was read she sank to her knees by an open window. It was full daylight—the wind had drawn the fountain before the front so that she might not clearly see the distant hill where the beacon stood. But even if the fountain had not obscured the view her eyes were too full of tears.

"If it be Thy will," she petitioned, "spare this man to me, so that his last days may be full of gladness. I have been thankless; my own comfort hath not satisfied, and Thou hast sent me this golden treasure."

Later in the morning she prepared to go to him, but first she passed to her garden and made a fair wreath of laurel, each leaf of which she warmed on her bosom. She drove very slowly, leaning back with closed eyes, dreaming of the love that had grown through many years, and of the genius she had called into life.

Humphrey was lying wakeful in his four-post bed; a faint colour reflected on him from the scarlet curtains. The duchess desired Lizbeth to permit her to enter unannounced: she stole in quietly and stood at his side.

He believed that it was a vision. "By



the Lord, she is more beautiful than ever!" he murmured.

She put out her hand and laid it in his. "It is I, Humphrey," she said. "I am a very old woman, but I have not forgotten the meaning of love. Yet, in truth, I never knew it till now."

He sighed happily. "I was sure that

seemed to sleep. After awhile he moved a little; the declining sun was lifting to his eyes; she half drew the curtain.

"I was poet for none save you," he said again: "I entreat you to let none else see the book."

"As you wish," she said in a triumphant voice.



"Let me crown you," she said.

you would come," he said. "If I had not known your tenderness I dared not have asked you."

She bent over him to kiss his forehead. "There is nothing in the world like your poetry," she said. "It will be the delight of all men."

He shook his head. "It was written for none save you," he replied, with a boyish laugh, "and none else must see it. It is the voice of my soul's desire."

She lifted the laurel wreath. "Let me crown you," she said.

So she placed the wreath on his head, and overcome with happiness he lay back and

"I dared not have asked if you had refused that," he whispered faintly, "but now I know—I know that you will not refuse."

"I shall not refuse."

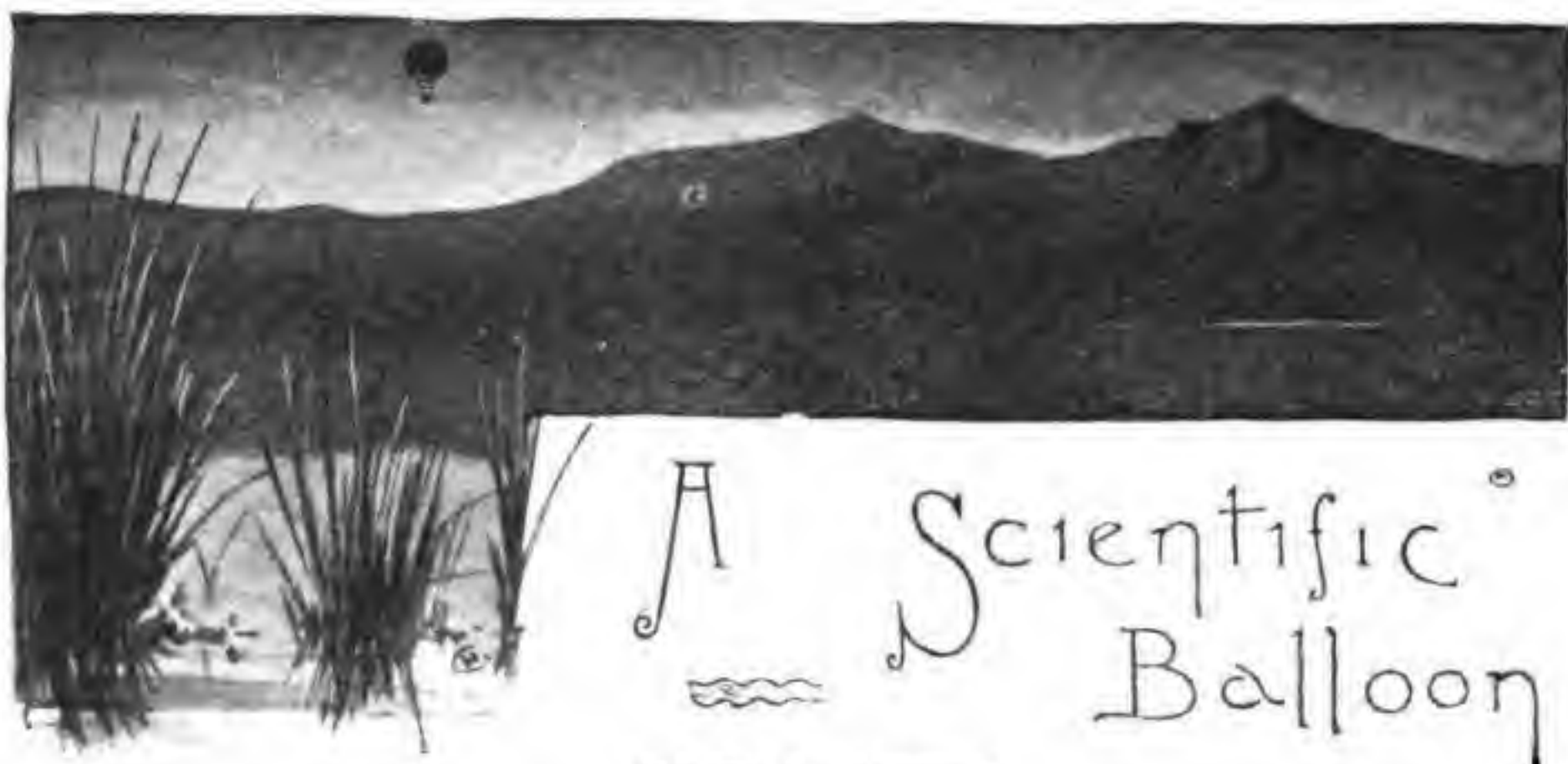
"When you die—after you are dead—let your head rest upon it."

"O sweetheart, sweetheart," she cried, "how you have tempted me! Death will have no terrors: I shall carry my dower with me."

His fingers nestled amongst hers; he began to breathe hurriedly.

"This is too beautiful, too happy," he gasped. "Kiss me again, again, again."





BY W. L. ALDEN.\*

*Illustrated by* CECIL HAYTER.

“**Y**OU'RE quite right, sir,” remarked the Colonel in reply to young Thompson's question, “I have been in some pretty tight places in the course of my life. A man can't fool along through fifty or sixty years of active life without finding himself occasionally in middling tight places. But wherever I am, so long as I am on solid ground, I generally calculate to be able to work myself out of almost any difficulty. It's when you put me aboard a ship, or in a balloon, that I begin to lose my grip. Speaking of balloons, I'll tell you right here, if you don't mind, of a little adventure I had—the only time that I ever was fool enough to trust myself in a balloon.

“One day there came to my house in New Berlinopolisville a fellow with a letter of introduction from Sam Kendall, who used to be ring-master of the ‘Hail! Columbia’ circus at the time when I was the manager and proprietor of the concern. Sam was one of the best of fellows, and consequently any friend of his was welcome at my house. Professor Montgomery, which was the name of Sam's friend, was a small, determined-looking chap that at first sight I would have taken for a light-weight fighting man, but, as it appeared, he was a balloonist. It's a singular thing that every man who goes up in a balloon professionally calls himself a Professor, while a miner who goes down a

shaft professionally never thinks of giving himself any such title. Sam's letter didn't say that Professor Montgomery was a balloonist, and I supposed he was a regular college Professor who had caught the look of a fighting man through teaching football and other athletic games to the students. So when he accepted my invitation to dinner, I just sent over for my old friend Professor Van Wagener, the great electric sharp, to come and join us, thinking that the two Professors would be good company for one another.

“Now it happened that Van Wagener, who was always interested in everything that was scientific and useless, was mightily interested in ballooning, and instead of being disappointed when he found out that Montgomery was an ignorant chap, who couldn't speak ten words of good grammar, he was just delighted to find that the man was a practical balloonist. The two got to work and talked balloon till you couldn't rest. Van Wagener said that it was his belief that a balloon properly constructed ought to be able to stay in the air for a month or a year at a time, and when Montgomery said that the thing wasn't possible, Van Wagener wanted him to explain why.

“‘It's plain enough,’ says the balloonist. ‘When your balloon rises and gets into thinner air the gas expands and escapes through the mouth of the bag. Even if it didn't escape it would always leak out through the silk or cotton, or whatever stuff the bag is made of. That's the reason why you can't

\* Copyright, 1895, by W. L. Alden.



stay up only a few hours. No man ain't never been able to invent a balloon that won't lose gas, and nobody never will invent one, for it can't be done.'

" 'If I make a balloon that can't possibly leak a single cubic inch of gas will you make an ascension with me, and attend to the practical management of the machine?' says Van Wagener.

" 'You can just bet I will,' says the other chap. 'Why, man, there'd be an everlasting fortune in such a balloon. But what's the use of talking about it? The thing can't be done, as you'll find out when you set down to invent your gas-tight balloon.'

and make it expand. When it had expanded to a certain point it would flow over into the rubber bag, and the lifting capacity of the machine would be increased about one third. Of course the balloon would rise, and when the balloonist wanted to descend again, all he would have to do, according to Van Wagener, would be to put out his lamp and let the globe cool off. It was a mighty ingenious contrivance, and Montgomery, who began by having no sort of confidence in Van Wagener, ended by thinking that perhaps he had really invented a balloon that could be made to stay up for ever.

" Nothing would satisfy Van Wagener but



" 'It was his belief that a balloon, properly constructed, ought to be able to stay in the air for a month or a year at a time.'

" Well the upshot of it was that Van Wagener set to work and made a balloon that even I could see was going to meet his requirement. The main balloon was a big globe of aluminium, and on the top of that was a bag of thick rubber connected with the globe by an automatic valve. The idea was that the globe would hold just enough gas to float the balloon at a height of two hundred feet above the earth. Now, being at that height, if the balloonist wanted to rise, all he had to do was to light a big spirit lamp that would heat the gas in the globe

that I should go along on the trial trip of the balloon. I wasn't in the least anxious to do it, for solid ground was always good enough for me; but Van Wagener, being an old friend, and liable, like all scientific chaps, to get himself into difficulties when he didn't have some practical man to look after him, I finally agreed to go. The ascension was to be made from my back-yard, where we would be out of sight of Mrs. Van Wagener and the general public. The machine was carted over to my house after dark, and the next morning, when we were ready to start, no



one knew anything of our intention except my coloured man, and he knew how to hold his tongue.

"I was surprised to find that Van Wagener had calculated the lifting power of the balloon so closely that he knew to an ounce just what weight she must carry in order to float, as he meant her to, a couple of hundred feet above the earth, and stay right there. Consequently all three of us had to be weighed, and we were a good two hours in reducing the weight of things in our pockets, or of increasing our weight with bits of gravel, until at last Van Wagener was satisfied that the whole weight of the machine, with us and our instruments and traps in it, would be exactly what he calculated that it ought to be. Then came the filling of the globe with pure hydrogen made on the spot, and consequently it was five o'clock in the afternoon before everything was ready and we made our start. The balloon rose slow and gentle, and when it was up to about the height of the steeple of the Roman Catholic church it gradually ceased rising and hung here perfectly quiet. There wasn't a breath of air stirring, so the thing had no sort of drift, and promised to stay just where she was until the wind should rise. The Professor was mightily pleased, and to my mind Montgomery ought to have been satisfied that the invention was all right, but he seemed a little uneasy, so I asked him what fault he had to find with the balloon.

"'We're all right so far,' says he, 'but the difficulty is going to be in keeping our weight just up to the standard and no more. I'll have more confidence in thish yer thing when the trial trip is over, and nobody killed. There's one thing that I don't exactly see, and that is how we are going to descend.'

"'I declare I forgot to provide for that,' says Van Wagener. 'However it will be time enough to think of that when we get through ascending.'

"He was as delighted as a child, and about as capable of looking into the future. With that he lights his spirit lamp, and presently the balloon begins to rise, just as he said it would.

"'What do you say to that?' says Van Wagener to Montgomery.

"'That's all right,' says Montgomery; 'she'll rise fast enough, but she ain't going to rise no more this afternoon,' and he blows out the spirit lamp.

"Van Wagener was pretty mad, and demanded to know what Montgomery meant by putting out the lamp.

"'While that lamp is burning she's using up spirit, ain't she?' he answered. 'Well, that is decreasing the weight in this balloon, ain't it? If you'll look over the side you'll see that we're rising at this minute, and there ain't no earthly way of pulling up.'



"'A small, determined-looking chap.'"

"Van Wagener and I both looked over the side, and we could see that we were about twice as high in the air as we had been. Just then the machine took a fresh start, and we could feel her going up at a pretty good pace.

"'What's the matter now?' says I.

"'Matter enough,' says Van Wagener, 'I've dropped my false teeth overboard.'

"'More weight gone,' says Montgomery. 'Now we'll go up till the balloon busts. If I'd known that you had false teeth I'd never have trusted myself here with you. I might have known that you would have been heaving of 'em overboard the first chance you could get. I never see a scientific man yet that was fit to be trusted.'

"'Do you really mean,' said I, 'that this balloon is bound to keep on going up?'



"‘We’ve only one chance,’ says Montgomery. ‘If there’s a heavy fall of dew to-night it may weigh us down enough to make up for the Professor’s teeth and the spirit he’s been burning. It’s our only chance.’"

"‘I knew then that I was in a pretty tight place, and I’d have given considerable if I’d never agreed to go along with Van Wagener. However there was nothing to be done except to wait for the dew, and so we all sat down in the car and waited."

"‘Luckily there was a heavy dew. Montgomery made us take off our coats and hang



"‘Montgomery made us take off our coats and hang them over the side.’"

them over the side so that they could catch all the dew there was, and about eight o'clock we found, by throwing over a bit of tissue paper, that we were gradually sinking. We kept on sinking most of the night, as I judge, and when the morning came we found we were about six hundred feet above the earth, and that we had drifted out of sight of New Berlinopolisville.

"‘Van Wagener was in high spirits, and began wringing out his coat and putting it on again. All of a sudden he sings out something which I didn't quite understand,

not being familiar with scientific terms, and at the same time the balloon began to mount up again.

"‘What has that blasted scientific idjot dropped overboard now?’ yells Montgomery.

"‘I happened to drop my purse out of my coat pocket,’ says Van Wagener; ‘but that is no excuse for your objectionable language.’"

"‘I knew it,’ says Montgomery. ‘Now we are done for; the sun will be out presently, and then the gas will expand. Colonel, I'm sorry you're in this scrape, but I'm glad you're not a family man.’"

"‘It did look middling scary. We sailed slowly upwards till the sun had warmed up the aluminium globe, and then we travelled straight up at a pace that couldn't fail to bring us up to twenty or thirty thousand feet before noon. There was only one way of making the balloon descend, and that was by letting out the gas. There being, however, no escape valve, we couldn't let out gas, and it didn't seem as if there was any possible way for us to escape. I will say this for Montgomery and the Professor, that they both showed that they were brave men. Montgomery cussed Van Wagener and science generally, but that was natural under the circumstances. Van Wagener sat quietly on the bottom of the car watching the barometer and making entries in his notebook, which he said would be of immense value to science in case they should be found. Neither of the men flinched a particle, though they knew that in all probability they would in course of time have a clean fall of say forty thousand feet. Of the two I was more sorry for Montgomery than for the Professor, for he didn't have the love of science to sustain him which the Professor had.

"‘We went up and up. The gas expanded with the heat of the sun and flowed over into the rubber bag, as Van Wagener had meant it should, and when this happened we about doubled our pace. We lost sight of the earth by nine o'clock in the morning, and by eleven o'clock the air had grown so thin that we began to have difficulty in breathing. Professor Van Wagener, whose lungs were weak, suffered worse than the rest of us, but he kept right on making his scientific notes, and to all appearance was enjoying himself as much as he had ever done in his life. Montgomery sat quiet, having grown tired of cussin' the Professor, and not having anything else to occupy his mind. I turned around to look over the side when the hilt of my revolver, which was in my hip pocket,





“ ‘Montgomery yelled to me to jump!’ ”



caught in the wicker work of the car and gave me an idea.

"See here, Montgomery," I said, "I can let the gas out of this balloon, but we'll have to take the risk of it's escaping so fast that we shall land in almost as much of a hurry as we will when the thing bursts."

"I'll take the chances," says Montgomery. "If you let out the gas we shall have a chance, even if it is a slim one; but if you don't let it out we're as dead as Julius Cæsar."

"What do you say, Professor?" said I, for I didn't want to act rashly.

"Certainly!" says the Professor. "By all means try your experiment, Colonel, though I should prefer that you should wait till we reach an elevation of twenty-seven thousand feet, which will be greater than anyone else has ever attained."

"We're high enough," says Montgomery. "I ain't pining to get among the angels just yet. Terry firmy is good enough for me."

"All right," says I, and I drew my revolver and fired at the aluminium globe. Of course the bullet went through it as if it was paper, making one hole where it went in and another where it came out. This gave the gas the choice of two ways of escaping, and it took them both.

"In the course of the next five minutes the balloon began to sink, and I had hopes that we might reach land safely. But Montgomery knew better. The balloon kept sinking faster and faster as more and more gas escaped, and in a little while we were dropping down almost as fast as we would have done had the balloon burst. The earth wasn't long in coming in sight, and the trees and fields and houses seemed to be rushing up to meet us.

"There was a good breeze blowing when we were, as Montgomery judged, about a mile high, and it drifted us westward towards a good-sized lake.

"If we can only stay up till we're over that lake we shall be all right," said Montgomery. "Colonel, just heave overboard everything there is in this car."

"With that he seized whatever he could lay his hands on, and I did the same, and for a minute or two it just rained instruments and things over that section of the country.

"Off with your boots, coats, waist-coats and hats," yells Montgomery. "Professor, if you've got any more portable teeth heave 'em over. We must get rid of every ounce of weight if we want to reach that lake."

"Well we reduced our clothing down to a pretty low point, and Van Wagener went so far as to throw over his glass eye, he having

no more teeth ready for discharging. Then we sat down and waited to see what the end would be.

"We were perhaps a quarter of a mile high when we came over the lake, and the moment we got where the water looked as if it might be fairly deep, Montgomery caught the Professor in his arms and threw him over without waiting to ask him if he was ready to go. Then Montgomery yelled to me to jump, and we all three left that balloon so suddenly that we all struck the water at pretty near the same time.

"I went down to the bottom, which was, as I judged, about fifty miles from the surface, though I afterwards heard that the lake was nowhere over forty feet deep. When I came up, Montgomery and the Professor were already swimming for land, and I followed their example. All the people of the neighbourhood had seen the balloon, and there was already a crowd of men, women and children on the shore waiting for us to land.

"This is exceedingly awkward," says the Professor. "I really can't face those people with only one eye and no teeth. Colonel, there's the balloon floating out there; I think we had better swim back to her and wait for an opportunity to land after dark."

"I'm going ashore," said Montgomery, "and I'd go if I hadn't a limb left, and every female boarding-school in Illinois was standing on the shore." However the Professor's general appearance was so ghastly that most of the women and children didn't care to wait for us.

"We came quietly ashore, and a farmer rigged us out with dry clothes that fitted about as badly as a French soldier's uniform, and then drove us twenty-two miles to New Berlinopolisville.

"The Professor seemed as happy as a young man coming back from a picnic with his best girl. He kept on talking about the tremendous success of his balloon, and what a fortune there would be in it when he should have invented some way of getting it down from the clouds at a reasonable pace. But Montgomery was mad all the way through. He wouldn't open his mouth till we got to our door, and then he turned on the Professor and told him that sooner than go up in a balloon that a scientific man had invented he would take and fill his pockets with dynamite and then get a New York policeman to club him. Then he said good-night to me, and went off down the street, swearing to himself in a way that was really unfit for publication. I never saw or heard of the man again."



# AT THE PYRAMID OF THE SACRED BULLS.

By CHARLES J. MANSFORD.

*Illustrated by* PERCY SPENCE.



HOUSSA," said one of two travellers to a certain famous Arab, "get to work and spin us one of your unvarnished yarns. Don't be too particular about dates or facts, we are prepared for anything after the last tall yarn you told us. Something exciting and mysterious is what we require, and let it be interesting enough to make us forget these beastly flies which not even bad tobacco smoke seems to daunt."

"Excellency," replied the Arab, "the dust of your august feet hears only to obey. Many strange cities and stranger lands has he seen, and many a strange adventure has he told to the pilgrims of Mecca as they reclined, where you do now, under the light of the crimson lamp. Ah, those blessed pilgrims, coming from afar! From where silver streams water golden sands, from where the tremulous lily stoops to kiss its shadow at the breath of the rose-laden wind from Sharon, from Egypt and India, from Persia and Africa, from the lands of fire and the dragon. To all pilgrims alike has the house of Houssa-el-Houssa been ever open, once they have fed the sacred pigeons and kissed the holy stone of the Kaaba. If so ye choose, to-night will I, your slave, repeat one of the tales to which the pilgrims have listened during the Hadj or pilgrimage."

"By all means tell us the story, Houssa," said I. "If the pilgrims could swallow it I dare say we can."

The Arab, who felt the force of the compliment, stretched himself idly upon the cushions and began:—

"Excellencies, before I married my third wife I was engaged as the messenger between two sheiks who lived one at Mecca and the other at Medina. The distance, about 370 miles, occupied me fully six days whenever I was sent by one to the harem of the other. I travelled on swift camels, which were changed at certain positions on the way.

"One day, as my camel stumbled forward through the burning sands, I saw two men approaching, and fearful that they were enemies I raised my pistol and fired at them,

hoping to bring one of the rascals down, so that I should be on even terms with the other. To my great surprise both fell to the ground, and thanking Allah that he had doubled my shot I quickly dismounted and ran to where the men were. They lay quite still with their faces downward; but just as I stooped over them to see where my bullet had struck them, one of them suddenly caught me by the leg, pulled me down, and getting my weapon from me clapped the pistol to my head.

"'You wretched nigger,' said he, in very bad Arabic, 'if you hadn't been such a vile shot you'd have settled one of us.'

"'The shot deflected,' I insisted, for it was not to be borne that a descendant of the great Prophet should be accused of being a bad shot. 'Let me return to the spot from which I fired, and if I don't bring you both down with two shots then you may each have a shot at me, and Allah send your bullets luck.'

"'The fellow has a conscience,' said one of the men to the other, and he laughed immoderately, as if a true believer were not his better.

"'Try him with a bribe,' said the other of the two travellers. 'I dare say the unwashed nigger knows every inch of the land round here and can tell us where the place is we have sought in vain for the last three days.'

"The one who had put the pistol to my head held a coin out to me.

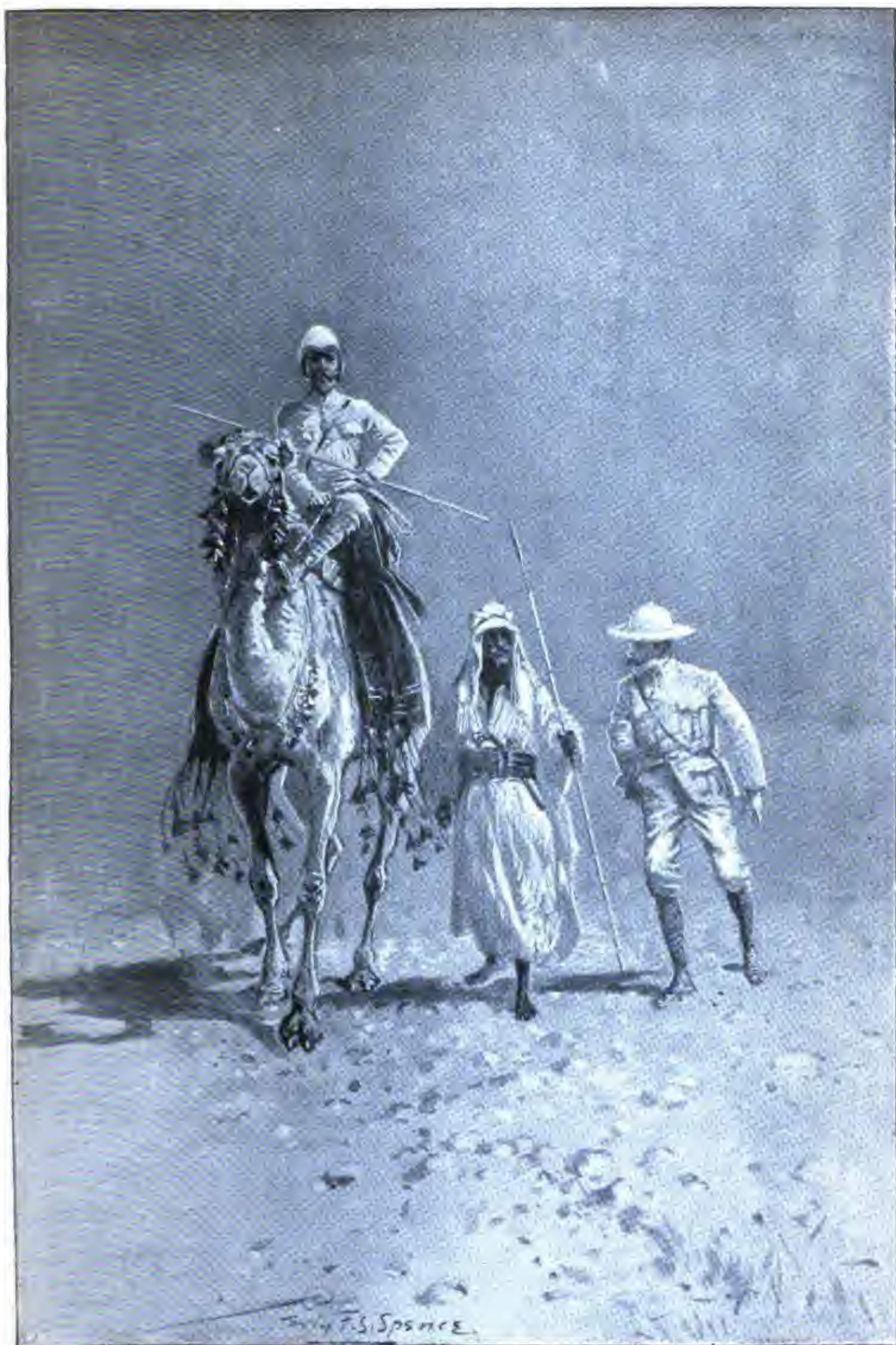
"'Take that as a memento of your wretched shot,' said he.

"I took the coin, for it is as well to despoil the unbeliever on all occasions, although if he had been more polite I should have returned it, or offered to, which is much the same thing.

"'Do you know the way to any pyramids about here, good fellow?' asked the one with a beard. 'We want a guide, and if you will act as such you shall have five yellow pieces, such as the one I have given you, provided that you give us some proof that you can be trusted.'

"'Ten coins,' said I, placing a proper





"We set forward; his companion walked by my side."



value on my services—which it is always well to do, even in a desert.

“‘Show us your credentials, assure us you know the shortest way to the pyramids, be good enough to let us ride that noisome camel of yours in turn, and the coins shall be yours—when we see the pyramids.’

“‘By your Excellency’s beard?’ I asked.

“‘By all the beards in the world and one over,’ was the response.

“‘I could very well show the pyramids, for they were on the way I was travelling. As to proofs that I could be trusted, I had a piece of paper given me by an Englishman, to whom I had acted as guide some years before. I cannot read the Feringhee writing, but it must be full of praise because everyone who reads it employs me.’

Houssa drew a faded scrap of paper forth, which was greasy beyond description, and which was written upon to the following effect:—

“‘The bearer, Houssa-el-Houssa, but whom I usually called “Like-a-lie,” acted as guide to me once when seeking the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls. He is a better shot, a cooler-headed, a braver, a stronger man than any six of his ilk rolled into one. He is likewise a bigger thief, a more urgent demander of backsheesh, a more distinguished liar, and a more odoriferous Arab than any I have ever met before—and this is saying a great deal in his favour, for I have sampled guides galore. He knows the world as well as his Koran, and while he robs you can quote the Prophet as his authority. It is quite unnecessary to pay him for his services as he pays himself, for fear you may be troubled with any slight aberration of memory. Worry him, hurry him, flurry him, do what you like with him, but you can safely trust him on the word of

MAX MELLOR, of Monmouth.

May 1885.’

“As I said, sahibs, the paper speaks good of me, and when the bearded one read it he passed it on to the other, who laughed and then asked me—

“‘So you took the writer of this precious document to the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls? What did he go there for—and did he get it?’

“‘Truth is in your Excellency, up to the topmost hair of your head,’ I replied. ‘Surely I took him there, but what he sought he found not, although he spent two days in the strange pyramid. He was too sure of his own knowledge to ask the son of the desert for help; yet if he had done so—’

“‘Could you have given it?’ the bearded one asked.

“‘I answered cautiously, ‘That depended on what he sought, and how much he cared to tell me concerning it.’

“‘Suppose we are going to this same pyramid and are also searching for something there, and you can help us, will you do so?’

“‘I could see that the bearded one was getting very excited, although he tried to assume an air of indifference.

“‘Tell me what you want to know and I will say if I can give the information.’

“The two talked and talked together like crows picking a camel’s hump together, and at last decided to trust the dust of their feet.

“‘We are seeking a roll of papyrus, a paper written in Arabic, and which we have heard is concealed somewhere in the Pyramid of the Sacred Bulls.’

“‘I have seen that very piece of mouldy papyrus,’ I answered.

“‘What did you read upon it?’ asked the bearded sahib, much excited.

“‘I did not read it; such things are of no interest to the son of the desert.’

“‘It is likely to be interesting enough to us if we find it,’ laughed the other.

“‘Help us to find it and you shall have not ten but fifty pieces of gold,’ said the bearded one.

“‘In Allah’s name it is a bargain,’ I said. I helped the one who had promised the gold to mount the kneeling camel; we set forward; his companion walked by my side; we spoke only occasionally and then but few words.

“Far in the distance rose the blue tops of a mountain range; round us on every side stretched a black waste. Here and there amid the black pebbles colocynth and sparse tawny spikes of grass shot up; fantastic shapes of mist, tempting lakes of mocking mirage, and a burning sun were about and above us. The stillness of death reigned supreme, save when rat or lizard moved at our approach among the stones.

“It was afternoon of the second day when the pyramids came in sight, which no Arab hands could have raised. Now, Excellencies, they lie buried beneath the sand, deeper and deeper each successive year.

“We found a spot sheltered from the rays of the sun beneath the shadow of a twisted rock. A handful of dates from the sack, a draught of muddy water from the skin, we took. For the next hour the two men smoked and talked and rested; their slave-



read a chapter of the Koran, for sunset was nigh.

"I hobbled the camel. At my bidding the men rose up and followed me. Bismillah! The accumulating sand had not quite closed the entrance to the shaft of the pyramid.

"We passed down a slanting passage for

there?' he asked, pointing down from the gallery to the space beneath.

"A hundred feet, more or less,' I answered: 'but there is no way known that leads to it. There Meeneis, the exiled king of Memphis, is said to have placed the body of Arga, the wife who shared his exile with him.'



"The two travellers were poring over the parchment."

300 yards or more and then entered a series of galleries. Round us were recesses; ranged in these were great sarcophagi in which the sacred bulls had long centuries before been buried. Excellencies, the Arabs say a king of Memphis, driven into Arabia by an incensed people, brought the strange worship into the land.

"The parchment ye seek is there,' I cried to those I had taken into the pyramid. I pointed as I spoke to a huge sarcophagus wherein I had once thrust it, intending to read it some day or another. They raised the lid of the sarcophagus, which was like the head and paws of a bull, gilded, too, with many a strange device.

"A minute after the two travellers were poring over the parchment, which they flattened out upon the rocky floor of the gallery as they lay outstretched beside it.

"When the two had read the parchment they stood up and stared into each other's eyes. They both trembled with excitement.

"Shall we go any farther in this mad business?' asked one.

"Why not? I fear neither the living nor the dead,' replied the other. He turned to me.

"How far is it to the bottom below

"So the parchment says,' said the bearded man to my surprise.

"We will soon see what truth there is in this incredible story,' said the other, tapping the mouldy parchment with his forefinger.

"For an hour or more the two men busied themselves in unwinding the mummy cloths which swathed what remained of the bodies of the sacred bulls. Some of the cloths were worm-eaten and fell into shreds when touched, others were in a good state of preservation; of the latter the two men made a strong and lengthy rope.

"When all was ready the rope was let down from the gallery and the bearded one was lowered by means of it to the depths below. We watched him oscillating in the void. When he reached the bottom of the strange pit the other sahib lowered me. I wished him to go instead, but he refused. I reached the bottom of the pit in safety.

"From above us the light came down in irregular shafts; great shadows half concealed the strange and grotesque carvings of the sides of the pit. From a narrow shaft, the top of which evidently opened into the side of the pyramid, fell a clear beam of sunlight, and it lit up the beautifully gilded sarcophagus of a woman.



"The Englishman, almost mad with excitement, wrenched off the lid of the sarcophagus, and then his sacrilegious hands seized the mummy. He lifted it from its resting place and stood it upright against the wall, unwinding its swathings in desperate haste.

"I could see that he searched for some concealed treasure upon the mummy, but he found it not. He went to the sarcophagus and carefully felt within it with his hand. Then he came back to where I stood trying to swathe the mummy in its cloth again. He snatched the cloth petulantly away and flung it upon the floor.

"*What* beggars these ancients were at hiding treasures!' he cried to me savagely. 'As there is no other way to get what I am seeking I will test the words of the parchment, if I have to strangle this dead but living thing after.' He waved his hand at the mummy, and I glanced at it closely. Beneath its swathing cloth the remains of a robe clung to its form, yellow with age, but the limbs of the mummy were not shrunken; the features were calm and placid as of one who slept; no traces of decay were upon them,

"*'Listen!'* the man went on, talking to me as he tried to screw up his courage for the strange task he was bent upon. 'This is the story of the parchment: Meeneis the exile determined to get back Memphis to his rule. Before he set out on his expedition he sold all his possessions and bought with them a pearl of fabulous price and gave it to Arga his wife. She, not knowing if Meeneis would come back or be slain in his expedition, and feeling that she could not live a day in his absence, besought him to employ a certain magician and embalmer.

By Arga's desire the man wrought a sleep upon her and swathed her, preserving, however, by his art the principle of life. Here Meeneis placed Arga, as you see. Had he conquered he would have come back and Arga been awakened to reign with him once more, but Meeneis never returned. All these centuries Arga has awaited him, and upon her, somewhere concealed, is the pearl. There is no other way to get the treasure. Arga shall be awakened that she may speak as to where it is.'

"I counselled the sahib not to do this wrong, but he would not hear me. Much as he



Meeneis! Meeneis! Lo! thy pearl!"



trembled at the task he set himself to, he took the wax from the mummy's ears, he dissolved the film upon the eyelids, he drew back the tongue till it rested in its right place. Then, as though bringing the drowned to life, he raised and dropped the mummy's arms at regular intervals.

"I watched like one transfixed. The minutes, slowly moving like hours, monotonously passed on. Then—then—yes!—*the lips of the mummy quivered!*

"A minute after a tremor seemed to shake her limbs, then Arga's eyes opened and the man started back, aghast at the success of his strange experiment.

"*Meeneis! Meeneis! Lo! thy pearl!*" the woman cried. She drew the pearl from the meshes of her hair and held it out, groping with her other hand as if blindness had come upon her.

"In an instant the man who sought the treasure caught at it, snatching it in his greed from Arga's hand. Undeceived—for her first awakening thought had been of Meeneis and the treasure he had left in her trust—the woman started forward with a cry

upon her lips. And then the irrevocable doom of mankind seized her. The beautiful face grew old beyond expression, her limbs shrunk suddenly with age, her cry of horror was never finished for she fell, a grotesque, shrivelled mummy, lifeless upon the floor!

"Quickly I thrust the mummy and its cloth into the sarcophagus, and then found that the sahib had already ascended from the pit. The two drew me up.

"That night we rested at a spot some miles distant from the pyramid. Next day I conducted them on the way to Mecca. There I received the promised reward.

"I told the strange adventure to the sheik whose messenger I was. He seemed much interested in the strangers and inquired which way they went. After that I was despatched to Medina. When next I returned to Mecca the sheik was wearing a magnificent pearl in his turban."

"And the travellers, Houssa?" I asked thoughtfully.

"It is as well not to ask a sheik too many questions," he replied. "Bismillah! Allah is good to his own!"



DOWN FLOWERS

BERTHA NEWCOMB





“ **N**OT yet, nurse, dear ; don’t let it be bedtime yet.”

These words, spoken in a low quivering voice, stayed a hand which had been put forth to lower the shaded lamp-light, and the nurse, tired and weary with her day of care, stepped across to the white bed with its pale little occupant.

“ You must try and go to sleep, Titmouse,” she said, “ because if you keep awake talking you will be too tired to sit up to-morrow in the big chair, and you want to get up on Christmas Day, don’t you ? ”

“ Oh, yes, I do. I want to-morrow so badly, instead of the dark night. It is so lonely and so quiet,” answered Titmouse, for such was the pet name bestowed upon her bright bird-like self ; but she knew how useless it was to protest, for her little china clock, ticking such constant company upon the chimney-piece, had tinkled out the hour of seven, and with a kiss and a few comforting words nurse withdrew into an adjoining room.

Titmouse had been very ill, and those who loved her had almost despaired of seeing her smile or of hearing the sound of that merry voice again. Then they had been told that she would live, but many and long seemed the days of weary waiting for the time when she was pronounced strong enough to sit up ; and it is on Christmas Eve, the night preceding that eventful day, that we first make the little girl’s acquaintance, her father and mother a short time before having come to bid their darling a loving good-night. But sleep seemed a long way off from Titmouse. Perhaps the thought of the morrow, with all its accompanying joys, had been overmuch for one who was still so very weak. How many of us have lain, like Titmouse, with wide sleepless eyes fixed upon the shaded light of the sick chamber, longing for that faint gray

light at the window heralding the dawn of day. She was nervously fanciful too. The pillow seemed hot, the bed hard. A thirst assailed her, she thought, and yet it was not thirst. She wanted she knew not what. Oh, for the morning ! Alas ! the night had but just begun. She sighed, she tossed, with rumpled hair clinging to burning cheeks, when suddenly there stole over the fever of her brow a cool perfumed breath, closing the tired blue eyes and banishing her restlessness, so that with a deep, quiet sigh, she lay, not sleeping, but conscious of a comforting presence—a being white and soft who bent and smoothed her tumbled pillow with the touch of a magic hand.

“ Titmouse ! ”

“ Yes,” brightly answered Titmouse, and she opened her eyes and fixed them in wonder upon a fairy, for it was indeed a beautiful being from fairyland who stood there smiling with folded wings. Titmouse had never seen a face so beautiful, had never even imagined anybody so strangely lovely as this fair creature of white and gold.

She smiled, and the fairy smiled back at her—such a smile ! Surely it was the Fairy Queen herself, thought Titmouse, and the fairy laughed as though in answer, and shook her head.

“ I am the Fairy-of-the-Night,” she said.

“ O—h ! ” breathed Titmouse. “ Will you stay with me, dear fairy ? ”

“ I will stay with you, dear child, until my sister comes to take my place. She is called Fairy Sleep, and to-night she has much to do, therefore I will comfort you until she appears.”

“ Oh ! ” gasped Titmouse, happily. “ What a kind, good fairy you are ! Do you know, I have always longed to see a fairy, and now — Oh, I am so glad ! ”

Fairy-of-the-Night smiled again and gently smoothed the child’s hair with a hand as white as milk.



"I will tell you a story," she said. "That, I know, you would like. What shall it be about?"

But Titmouse could think of nothing but her wonderful visitor, and exclaimed, "O, dear Fairy-of-the-Night, tell me just anything nice!" and she got ready to listen with such a face of delight that would have astounded the doctor could he have stepped in at that moment and seen it.

Now you may or you may not have noticed, dear reader, that fairies, as a rule, are prone to take things very comfortably. When did you ever see a fairy in an awkward or an ungraceful position? Never. Or when did you ever know a fairy to stand for any length of time when there was anything suitable for a fairy's seat near by. If it is possible for them to be tired like other folks I should say

that more often than not they are quite ready to take a rest at any moment. Not that this is at all surprising considering the amount of work they have to get through, and the long distances they have to travel in a short time, for the Fairy Queen has employment for them all, and is so bright and alert that nothing escapes her notice. She does a great deal of work herself too, but of course, being the queen, and having her kingdom to look after, she only has to do with very special business, and only travels any great distance on very important occasions.

So Fairy-of-the-Night sprang lightly upon the bed, and reclining caressingly against Titmouse, thus began:—

"Two little sisters sat beside the sea talking of their father, who long ago had sailed away in a great ship. So long ago was it that they neither of them had any recollec-

tion of him, for at the time of his departure Minna was scarcely three years old, and now was eight, while Madge, now six, was then a tiny baby in her mother's arms. And ever their mother would talk to them of their dear father, and sometimes the great tears would fall down her cheeks when she thought that they might never see him again. And Minna would steal a soft arm round her mother's neck and comfort her in her gentle way, so thoughtful beyond her years was Minna. But Madge would run out petulantly into the sunshine and call for her sister to come and play in the rocks, and the mother would kiss Minna and send her, the child's words echoing again and again in her ears, 'I am thinking of him too, dear mother. I know he will come soon because we want him so.'

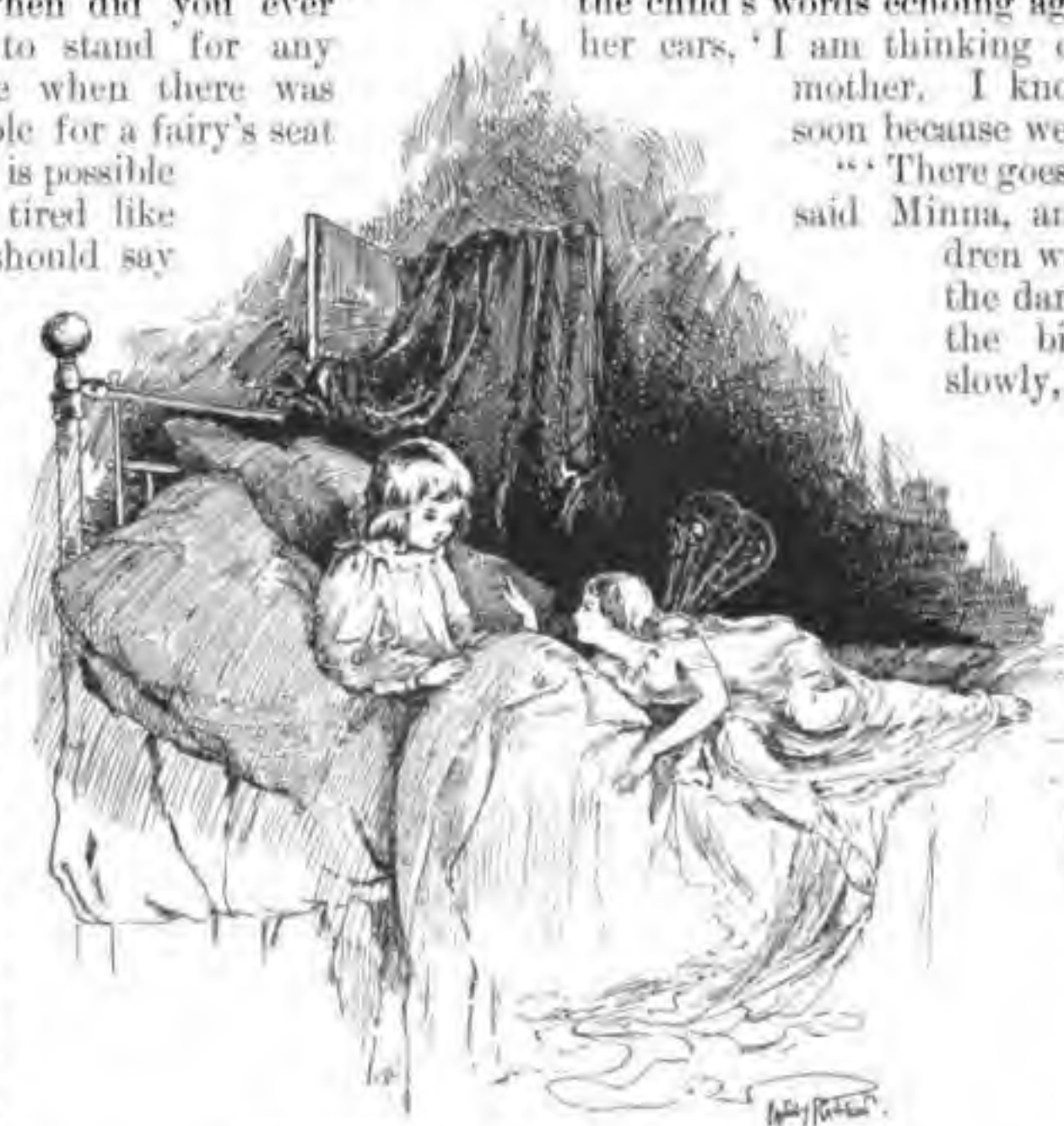
"There goes a beautiful ship," said Minna, and the two children watched it pass on the dark horizon, as all the big ships passed, slowly, slowly, into the misty distance, and was gone.

"Madge! Madge! come to bed child!" called a well-known voice; and Madge arose and ran into the house. But Minna sat on alone in the closing shadows, with the little waves rippling to her feet.

"Then I, Fairy-of-the-

Night, came to her. I came to her over the waves and took her hand, and bade her come with me. And she, in sweet astonishment, rose to do my bidding.

"I called up a fairy boat and sat her in it, and we sped with a gossamer sail to Africa, where a great ship stood ready to depart across the seas. I placed her upon the great ship's deck and she passed among the passengers unseen. Presently she saw in the crowd two men who stood together talking and laughing in a very joyful mood. And one of these was tall and bearded, with beautiful gray eyes like her own. He was browned with the African sun, and his pockets were heavy with gold.



THE COMING OF "FAIRY-OF-THE-NIGHT."



"What happiness," he cried, "to be bound for home! How I long to clasp in these arms my dear wife and my little Madge and Minna!"

"O father! father!" screamed Minna, and flew to him with outstretched arms. But the next moment, instead of her father, she found herself clasping a hard, cold rock, on the seashore, and her mother was calling her into the house.

"Mother! father is coming home!" she cried, and rushed in sobbing with joy. "A fairy has shown me my father, and when he comes I shall know him; oh, I shall know him!"

"It is true," said the mother solemnly. "The child is inspired."

"But Madge, when she heard of it, laughed her sister to scorn, for she was one

all for our own selves and silk purses to keep it in. Mrs. Jones would then send for the things out of our garden, instead of expecting us to bring them. Yes, I wish father would come home with a lot of money!"

"Dear Madge," said Minna gently, "I would carry baskets for ever and ever if father would come home and love us! And he is coming too. I saw him on the ship."

"Now as they turned a corner in the dusty lane they saw coming quickly towards them a tall bearded man. The sun was hot, but he seemed not to heed it, his wide felt hat being pushed far back upon his head as he gazed eagerly around him. Then suddenly a basket of vegetables went flying into the road, a little figure stood before him, two little hands clung to his coat, and a pair of beautiful gray eyes gazed up into his."

"You are father!" cried Minna. "O dear father! dear father!"

There was silence in the sick chamber, save for the ticking of the clock. Titmouse no longer tossed in fevered restlessness, but lay quietly gazing at Fairy-of-the-Night with a smile of restful happiness.

"And did you really take Minna all the way to Africa?" she asked.

"Certainly," responded the fairy; "but not in a visible form, nor indeed in a solid one!" she added laughing.

"And was their father really rich?" Titmouse next inquired.

"He was," replied the fairy. "He went out to the gold-fields, and after long perseverance he dug up ——"

"Sister, I am here!"

What was that? Another voice in the room? Titmouse turned her head and saw, standing at the other side of the bed, another fairy—a fairy with a sweet pale face, and wearing a long robe and hood of dusky blue.

"I am late, sister," she said; "I have but now left the children's hospital." She sighed, and a tear like a pearl dropped upon her robe.

"Why do you cry?" exclaimed Titmouse. "Oh, don't cry! Come to me, and let me kiss you better!"

She spoke in a soothing, caressing voice, very near to tears herself, but with an assurance of faith in her own ability to comfort that was strange and wonderful in so small a child. And Fairy Sleep turned a radiant face upon her.

"O my little one," she said, "you are so full of sympathy! How you will suffer, sweet, in the years that are to come!"



"MINNA."

of those who do not believe in our existence, and made great fun of what she called 'Minna's dream.'

"What a big silly you are, Minna," she said. "As if there are such things as fairies! I have never seen one," and she laughed shrilly and took up a little basket of new-laid eggs to carry to the village.

"Some time after this the two children went to the village together, carrying with them the produce of their mother's garden to sell at the little greengrocer's shop.

"I wish we were rich," suddenly said Madge.

"Father is bringing plenty of money," said Minna.

"O Minna, you are stupid!" cried Madge. "I wish he would, indeed, then we shouldn't have to carry these tiresome baskets. We should have plenty of money



There came a faint sigh upon the air, and the lamp grew dim. Fairy-of-the-Night was gone! So Fairy Sleep bent over the now drooping eyes of Titmouse and kissed her softly on the brow.

"Good-night, my sweet little one!" she murmured, "good-night." Then she too was gone, and the little girl was sleeping.

And then a curious thing happened. A door on the opposite side of the room to the one by which the nurse had gone out, opened suddenly and noiselessly to admit two figures who crept silently towards the bed.

It was the father and mother of Titmouse.

"She sleeps!"

"Yes, she is sleeping beautifully!"

"Where is the stocking? Oh, here, hanging ready—the darling child!"

"Hush! speak lower!"

After these whisperings came a faint rustling of tissue paper as a parcel was pressed into a little brown stocking hanging upon a knob of the bedstead.

"I should like to kiss her."

"No; better not."

"Yes; it might rouse her. She sleeps beautifully! Come!"

They crept back across the room and out at the door, closing it gently behind them. And the little china clock tinkled another hour nearer to Christmas Day.



THE COMING OF "FAIRY SLEEP."



# THE GHOSTS OF NETHER TALKINGTON.

BY HENRY A. HERING.

*Illustrated by WILL OWEN.*



ETHER TALKINGTON is a quaint old red-built, red-tiled townlet. It is the seat of the camel-hair paint-brush industry, but at the time this story opens it had another and

more singular claim to distinction. It was the only place in the kingdom that possessed a genuine ghost. There have been many reputed ghosts up and down the country, but their existence has never been satisfactorily proved. These fictions show their presence by absurdly stumping on bare boards, clanking heavy chains, breaking crockery, moving heavy furniture, and by giving utterance to weird and uncouth sounds—manifestations utterly without rhyme or reason, and which cannot in any one case be traced to a *bonâ fide* spirit.

Not so was it with the ghost of Nether Talkington. It was a genuine Elizabethan relic, the shade of an old squire who had come to a bad end after leading an awful life, and the Nether Talkingtonians were very proud of it. It resided at the Grange, at the far end of the town. For generations no mortal being had lived there. It was specially set apart for the ghost, the local authority arranging that the moat was always filled with stagnant water, and that the place was kept in the desolate condition so appropriate to its tenant.

It was an ideal place for a ghost to dwell in, and the shade of the Squire evidently thought so, for it never left the spot. Summer and winter it was to be found there by all desirous of an interview, and many were those who came.

Nether Talkington owed much of its prosperity to the ghost, for never a day passed without visitors turning up for the purpose of interviewing it, and on some days they came in shoals. Matters had much improved in this respect since the Psychological

Research Society had investigated the phenomenon and pronounced it genuine; for this had introduced a big American custom, and in the summer large parties came from Stratford on their way to London.

It was a harmless ghost, and of a taciturn disposition. Sometimes it would speak, but



"The evening hour it spent in perambulating the terrace."

on those occasions its language was chiefly maledictory. It was extremely methodical in its habits, and was to be seen any time



between midnight and cock-crow, and between nine and ten p.m. In the early hours it sat in the dining-room smoking a fantastic



"The report spread that the ghost was missing!"

pipe that had been given to the Squire by his friend Sir Walter Raleigh, and the evening hour it spent in perambulating the terrace by the sun-dial on the look-out for a lady who had made an appointment some three hundred years ago which she had failed to keep.

This methodical arrangement of the ghost had existed, according to authentic accounts, from the Squire's death, at the end of the sixteenth century; and his shade had never varied its programme within living memory. Conceive, therefore, the consternation that reigned in Nether Talkington when the report spread that the ghost was missing! A large party of visitors from Tontine, Dak., had called upon it at two a.m. and the guide had been unable to give them value for their shillings. They waited till four o'clock, but to no purpose; and although their money was returned they left Nether Talkington the

next morning in high dudgeon. That night a missionary and a photographer, armed with a flash-light apparatus, were in waiting by the sun-dial, but they waited in vain.

The disappearance of the ghost was a severe blow to the town, for the shilling admission had eased the burden of taxation for its inhabitants, and then there was the loss of prestige. But it was particularly hard on the landlord of the "White Swan." He had paid a heavy price for the business some two years ago on the basis of custom to be brought by the ghost, and without that he might as well put up his shutters; for the gentlemen who sold the camels' hair went to the opposition house. There was also a butcher, a baker, possibly a candlestick maker, sundry cooks, waiters and chambermaids on whom the matter would press hard, to say nothing of the boots, while the guide to the Grange found starvation staring him in the face; for he had seen perpetual tips ahead and had made no provision for the unexpected.

As the matter was one of importance to the whole community no objection was raised when, at the next Parish Council meeting, mine host of the "White Swan," Roger Wharton by name, referred to the subject. He pointed out that the ghost of the Grange had brought honour and renown to the town, and had incidentally lightened the taxes. Was it



"The guide to the Grange was admitted to the workhouse."

right that they should meekly allow it to abscond, thereby reducing Nether Talkington from its unique position to the level of its



neighbours, and without a struggle submit to the grievous imposition of heavy rates?

The Vicar, who was in the chair, agreed as to the lamentable state of things consequent on the disappearance of the ghost, but submitted that nothing could be done. They had no legal or moral power over the shade of the Squire. It had made no agreement to reside in the Grange for perpetuity, and although it had certainly behaved unhandsomely in absconding without a moment's warning, they had no redress.

Other speakers followed. It was proposed that a sub-committee should be appointed to deal with the matter, and names were suggested; but on these councillors asking in what direction they were to pursue their inquiries, and what were their powers, no satisfactory answer could be given, so they refused to act, and the matter was left precisely where it was before.

A fortnight passed. The ghost did not return. Visitors ceased to flock to Nether Talkington, the staff of the "White Swan" was reduced, and the guide to the Grange was admitted to the workhouse.

The next meeting of the Parish Council took place, and the Squire's ghost stood again on the agenda paper. When this point was reached the Chairman said that the ghost was still missing, and he understood that Councillor Timperley wished to say something on the subject.

Councillor Sam Timperley, the principal greengrocer of the place, stood up.

"Yes, Mr. Chairman," he said, "I have something to say, and before I say it I shall have to give you a little information about myself. You all know that I am a vegetarian, but perhaps it will be news to you that I am something more. I'm a Buddhist."

If he had stated that he was an anarchist he could not have caused more consternation. A general murmur of surprise and disgust ran round the table, and his immediate neighbours edged away from him. Undeterred by this manifestation of feeling the greengrocer went on—

"Yes, I'm a Buddhist, and I'm proud of it! and if you knew what it meant you'd all be one."

"Never!" came in a firm tone from Councillor Mudford, the local chemist.

"You'd all be one," repeated Timperley, glaring at his interrupter. "Now you none of you know what a Buddhist is, and I'll leave it to you to find out for yourselves, but I'll just tell you this much. When a

Buddhist has gone through a certain course of training he can disintegrate himself, that is, he can make his astral shape or spirit leave his body and travel where it likes. I can do this."

"Oh, oh!" cried the assembled councillors in derision.

"I can do this, I say," calmly continued the greengrocer, "and I am prepared, on certain terms, to do it for the benefit of Nether Talkington. The Squire's ghost is somewhere about, and though a human being cannot find it an astral shape can. Set a spirit to catch a spirit. I am prepared to disintegrate myself and let my astral shape search for the Squire; and if he's anyway like reasonable I'll engage to bring him back."

"Gentlemen," said the Vicar, rising, "I think we had better proceed to the next business. I have always had a sincere respect for Mr. Timperley, but I think he is not himself to-night. What he has just said convinces me that he is at present suffering from some extraordinary hallucination. I have no doubt it is only temporary, and we must all hope that he will soon be restored to his normal mental state. Nothing can be gained by discussing what we have just heard, and with your permission we will now pass on to the drainage question."

"Mr. Chairman," said Timperley in firm tones, "I protest against your imputations. I am as clear in my head as anyone here, and as free from hallucinations as the best of you. What I have said I repeat. I am prepared to let my astral shape travel in search of the Squire's ghost; and that I can do it I know, for yesterday it made its first journey into space, and with perfect success. Yesterday, gentlemen, Sam Timperley's spirit left his body and after wandering at will came back, and Sam Timperley's spirit will do it again if necessary."

"Perhaps you'll tell us what you saw on your trial trip," said one councillor with a sneer.

"I don't think you'd like me to do so, Mr. Sellars," said Timperley gravely. "Unseen I visited the houses of all I see present to-night, and I found a skeleton in the cupboard of each house."

"Then you took a great liberty, Timperley," said the chemist.

"I found a skeleton in the cupboard in each house," continued Timperley, looking fixedly at the speaker, "and some, Mr. Mudford, were very big ones!"

Mr. Mudford shifted uneasily in his chair but remained silent.



"No, gentlemen," the greengrocer went on, "I'm not deceiving you, for I can do what I propose. Anyway you will be no losers, for if I don't succeed matters will be no worse. If I do, Nether Talkington will regain its lost position." Saying which Mr. Timperley resumed his seat.

"Gentlemen," said the Chairman, "you've heard Councillor Timperley's proposal. I for my part cannot for a moment believe in the possibility of what he asserts. Still if he wishes to attempt the impossible I do not see that we can object. In fact it is a matter that rests solely with Mr. Timperley, and there was no need for him to bring it before us at all."

The greengrocer rose again: "I said I was prepared to do it on certain terms. It is not an easy thing to do, and the disintegration of a personality is attended with grave risk. Cases are on record in which the body has succumbed under the strain, and the astral shape, unable to return to it, has to wander for ever without a home. My body is not a strong one. I gave it a severe wrench yesterday, and

I am not prepared to run the risk again for nothing. My terms are that if I bring the ghost back I shall receive half the future receipts for admission to the Grange."

"Oh, oh! I dare say. Why not take the lot?" and kindred sarcasms burst from the councillors assembled.

"I am running a risk, Mr. Chairman," repeated Councillor Timperley, "and I expect to be paid for it. If I don't make the attempt you won't get the ghost back, that's a dead certainty. It is simply a question whether you will take fifty per cent. of future receipts or be content with nothing."

The matter was put very plainly by the little greengrocer, and on reflection the reasonableness of his offer was apparent. After some discussion it was finally agreed, with one dissentient, the implacable Mudford, that if, after a further week's waiting, the ghost did not appear, Councillor Timperley was at liberty to make his attempt to bring it back on the terms he had proposed.

The week passed, and still the Grange remained without its tenant. The next evening Councillor Sam Timperley entered it on his daring venture. Several fellow-councillors accompanied him to the door,

but at his special request they did not go any farther. He appeared at a window to wave his final adieus, and then darkness and mystery settled over Nether Talkington Grange.

Popular feeling was greatly excited that night, and many were the rumours afloat. One respectable ratepayer said that he had met the Squire's ghost in the outskirts of the town with a gun under its arm taking a short cut across the fields in the direction of the

Grange, and those that heard this trembled for the fate of Sam Timperley. Others said that at a later hour they had seen the spirit of the disintegrated greengrocer diving into the moat in its search for the missing one, and that they waited in vain for its reappearance; but these and other reports appeared trivial when confronted with the actualities of the morrow.

At nine a.m., according to arrangement, the clerk to the Parish Council entered the Grange to see how it fared with Sam Timperley's body. He heard voices as he entered, and had he not recognised the



"Some, Mr. Mudford, were very big ones!"



greengrocer's he would probably have run away. As it was he courageously proceeded to the room from which they came. He opened the door very gently and peered inside. The sight that met his eyes was enough to unnerve the strongest; for there, sitting in a chair, was the animated body of Sam Timperley engaged in lively controversy with the spirit of its owner, which was pacing the room in terrible distress.

"I tell you, Squire," said the spirit, "it's an unkind trick you have played me. I came after you to bring you back to your friends and to the old home where you have been contented and happy for so long, and where you will be cared for and well looked after for the rest of your days; and there you go and repay me by robbing me of my poor body that never did you any harm in its life."

"Gadzooks, sir!" replied the body. "I thank you for your courteous intent, but I shall not leave this body of yours now that I have obtained possession of it.

It's a rare chance, good sir, a chance that does not come more than once in the lifetime of a poor ghost, to find an untenanted body awaiting an owner. Your awkward position distresses me grievously, but as you seem to think I have been happy and contented here there is

no reason why you should not experience the same feelings when occupying my old position."

"But, Squire," pleaded the spirit in piteous entreaty, "it isn't right. I appeal to your sense of honour. Now, is it?"

The body waved its hands blandly.

"I think that is outside the question at issue, sir," it said. "You evidently did not

attach much value to your body or you would not have been so ready to leave it. Mind you, although I now have 'a local habitation and a name,' as Will hath it, my own position is by no means an enviable one. Your body does not suit me, sir."

"You won't be at all comfortable in it, Squire," said Timperley eagerly. "It only just fitted me, and you're a much larger man. You'll never be thoroughly at home in it."

"Well, I must make the best of it," said the body resignedly. "No doubt this carcass of yours will stretch a bit; but it's terribly dry inside. I warrant me it's long since you had a stoup of honest Canary or good red Burgundy.

Canst tell me where I may get a tankard of home brewed?"

"Oh, you mustn't drink wine!" cried the spirit in alarm. "You really mustn't. My constitution can't stand it! I've been a teetotal-vegetarian for many years."



"He fled precipitately."



"And what may that be, sir?" asked the body.

"My body is not accustomed to either beer, wine, or animal flesh. Water, lemonade and milk for liquids, and porridge, vegetables and rice puddings for solids, that has been my fare, and is what you must take."

An expression of unutterable contempt passed over the body's face. "I'm afraid you have been too modest, sirrah," it said with withering sarcasm. "We must try the effect of good ale and wine, of roast beef and pork on this precious body of yours."

"Oh, but you mustn't!" cried the spirit. "If you do you'll have headaches and palpitations. Mine is not a strong body. It will go off in a fit if you drink wine."

"Egad!" cried the body in fierce anger. "Do you mean to tell me I've got into a sickly carcass like that? Is it for this I've changed my position of independence? Be-shrew me if I don't so alter this body of yours that your own mother wouldn't know it! It's not a pretty one now, but it will be worse before I've done with it."

Then its eyes fell upon the clerk, who had incautiously intruded his head so as to lose nothing of what was going on.

"How now!" it cried, starting to its feet. "A listener! Who are you, varlet? Answer me, or I'll run you through with my hanger!"

But the clerk did not stay to answer or be run through. He fled precipitately, bearing the terrible news to the town that the Squire had returned and taken possession of Sam Timperley's body in its owner's absence, and now refused to give it up.

This was altogether too much for the Nether Talkingtongians to believe, and an incredulous crowd soon streamed into the Grange to see for themselves what had happened. They found the spirit of Coun-

cillor Sam Timperley on its knees uttering piteous entreaties to its own body.

Mr. Mudford was the only man among them who did not turn tail and fly. Sam Timperley was evidently in trouble, and that gave him strength to resist his first impulse to follow the others. He walked boldly into the room, and Timperley's spirit had sunk so low that it eagerly welcomed him.

"Here's Councillor Mudford," it said, rising to its feet. "You know how matters stood, Mr. Mudford. Tell the Squire he must give me back my body at once. It's a terrible position for me to be standing here out in the cold with another man in my own body. It's simply monstrous!" and tears welled to the eyes of the green-grocer's shade.

"I'm very sorry for you, Timperley," said Mr. Mudford, "but you would do it. You knew you were running a risk and you must take the consequences."

"I shall claim the fifty per cent. at any rate," said Timperley sullenly, "for I brought the Squire back."

"Nothing of the sort, sir," said the body. "I walked back last night from a friend's house of my own accord. He's been asking me for the

past ninety years to have some shooting with him, and I thought it would be discourteous to refuse him any longer."

"There, Timperley," said Mr. Mudford. "You've only hurt yourself and done no good to anyone."

"And who'll look after my business now?" whimpered the spirit.

"This gentleman, I suppose," chuckled Mudford. "He's got to earn his living somehow; your customers will never notice the change," he added consolingly.

"And Ellen!" cried the spirit. "I can't marry Ellen now!"

"Never mind," said the body, "I'll look after Ellen."



"'Never mind,' said the body, 'I'll look after Ellen.'"



Sam Timperley's spirit seemed about to faint under the overwhelming horrors of the situation, and Mr. Mudford stood gloating over its distress. At length the Squire rose and commenced to walk the body about. It moved clumsily, and its tenant cursed it loud and deep; suddenly it stopped.

"Sir," it said, addressing Mr. Mudford, "I have a craving for food. Will you favour me by directing me to a hostel possessing a good ordinary?"

"I will, with pleasure," replied Mudford. "Mr. Wharton, I am sure, will be pleased to stand you a rattling breakfast at the 'White Swan'; afterwards we'll step round to Timperley's shop and take possession, and then we'll call on Ellen."

"If you do I'll haunt you!" shrieked the poor spirit.

"Pooh!" said Mr. Mudford, snapping his fingers. "You won't frighten us; we know your weight," and linking his arm in the body's he piloted it out of the room, leaving the spirit of Councillor Sam Timperley in possession of Nether Talkington Grange.

And so the matter stands to-day. The Squire did not take up the greengrocery business—he had a soul above it—but he married Ellen, and accepted the vacant post of guide to the Grange.

It is now his pleasing duty to show to the visitors, who come in increasing crowds, the astral shape of Sam Timperley that sits there moodily brooding over its ill-luck. It is very ready to talk to anyone about its singularly unfortunate position, and the guide is always glad to join in the conversation and irritate it. The visitors are more interested than ever, and the Parish Council has doubled the charge for admission. Sometimes the spirit of Sam Timperley is absent for a few hours, and on its return it says it has just slipped across to Thibet to discuss the matter with a leading Mahatma, who has promised, when he has the time to spare, to run over and exorcise the ghost of the Squire and restore the body to its rightful owner. But the Mahatma must be a very busy individual for he has not yet found time to do it.







### NO FAIRIES?

You say there are no fairies?  
 Why, I think you must be blind;  
 The garden simply teems with them  
 Of every sort and kind.

There's a princess in the lily,  
 And her lover in the rose,  
 And pixies in the poppies hide,  
 As everybody knows!

And there, beneath the dahlia,  
 Sits a jolly little gnome,  
 And on that snowy butterfly  
 A prince is riding home!

You say that you can't see them?  
 Nurse says that "can't" means "won't."  
 But perhaps you've been a naughty child—  
 For naughty children don't.

You just see snails and spiders?  
 And ne'er a pretty fay?  
 Then in the end a goblin grim  
 Will carry you away!

*Wilfrid Wilson Gibson.*



# THE WISHING-TREE.

By E. NESBIT.



DEW was gray on grass and clover. The thrushes sang in the orchards, and on the trim lawn the blackbirds hopped and pecked.

Beyond the shadow the sun had already drunk the dew out of the buttercups and left them shining, new-washed gold. In the hedges the white may-bushes shone like silver. The flowered grasses of the meadow were like a gray sea waved and dappled by the wind. The shadows of the elms lay long across the pasture where the sheep browsed, and

down by the pool in the angle of the hedges the cattle stood and grazed sleepily. Above the bean-field, beautiful with gray leaves and scented white blossoms, the skylarks rose singing. The whole world seemed born again into a new and wonderful beauty, or so it seemed to her, because now for the first time she saw the world in its morning gown of dew and delight, the memory of the moon's kisses still clinging to the hidden hollows where the dew lay gray on grass and clover.

As she went down the lane the wet grass made her smart shoes too shiny. Also the ground was cold to her feet as she walked.

"I must be very fond of him," she said. And indeed to leave one's sleepy-soft bed, to dress without one's maid, to steal down creaking stairs to unbar reluctant doors and walk two miles through wet grass for the sake of a young man does argue some fondness.

She wore a simple gown of white—simple, because her soul instinctively approved the congruous—Paris fashions and a May morning were a discord not to be borne—white, because he loved white. "Not that I shall see him," she said; but truly her way home would lead her by his window, as her way thither had already led her by it, white-curtained, white-blinded, decorously dormant.

"He might be looking out when I go by again," she thought as she softly rustled by along the lane, keeping close to the hedge. If one gets up at five on a May morning it is not to show one's white gown to the curious gaze of an early-rising housemaid. She glanced anxiously at the windows. All the blinds were down.

His blind was down, but from behind it he, awake in the grayness of the curtained room, heard the tap tap of her little heels on the path, and springing up, peeped out. And as she left the shelter of the hedge he saw a glint of her gown. And now surely shoes and collar-studs and buttons had never been so mutinous, fingers never so awkward. Yet in five minutes he was down the stairs and after her along the lane, the sun acclaiming his white flannels as it had done her white gown. In fine, he followed her, as any man would have done—as I would have done—as I did indeed, since he was I.

And I had no right to follow her, because but a week ago we had parted in anger, asserting that we had mistaken our feelings, and protesting bitterly that we would always be friends. Her ingenious malice indeed had even threatened herself to me as a sister. We had met every day since—in our village it is hard not to meet—and as no one had known of our love so there was none to enlighten as to our parting.

"There was no glint of her gown to guide me, but I knew how to follow, for I knew her goal. Only the other day she and a group of the girls, of whom she now drew a defensive cordon round her, had talked and laughed over the old spell.

If one desired anything above all else in the world, nothing was simpler than to gain one's heart's desire. One had but to rise with the sun on one's birthday morning, and fasting, and in unbroken silence, to fare to the Goblin Wood, there to pass into the wishing-tree, and standing within it to speak aloud, and thrice, one's secret wish. Then passing out on the tree's other side, one fared homeward to meet one's heart's desire.

"I don't believe in it," she had said; "but I shall have a birthday one of these days."

So I knew whither she was bound, for this was her birthday, as the little diamond circlet in my pocket testified to my hand.



I knew her goal, and I knew more—I knew the shortest way to it. Not the road by which one travels in merry parties, but the way one treads when alone, with a gun or one's own thoughts. So I crashed through the brambles that clung to the arms and the stiff hazel that stung the face, and when I reached Goblin Wood I could see her white gown, still a great way off, crossing the big meadow where the mushrooms grow. So all being fair in war—had we not protested that we were friends?—I hid myself in the hollow oak near the wishing-tree to spy upon her and find out the dearest wish of her heart.

The Goblin Wood was very still. When I moved, the touchwood of the inner oak crumbled and fell dully about me. The damp, mossy, mouldy smell of my hiding-place, the shifting lights and shadows on moss and leaves—I had time to learn the place by heart, and I have it all still.

Goblin Wood is a big plantation of pollarded oaks and willows. Thus far the fact, as my friend the wood-reeve gives it. Leaving the folly of fact, the sober truth is that it is a haunt of goblins, "as uncanny a spot as ever a nightmare galloped to." For the oaks and willows, their placid pastoral spirit warped by the pollarding knife, have changed their nature, and, as it were, by some infusion of manhood from the hand that lopped them, they have become half human, grotesque, horrible; great goblin heads leering wickedly, with long green hair standing up in horror; strange, twisted, robed woman-shapes, wringing gnarled hands high in air; unimagined deformities, twisted backs and writhen arms; owls' heads, cats' heads, deaths' heads. In spite of the pollarding the trees are very big; they seem to have grown big as they have grown human, in defiance of the hand that lopped their fair sylvan proportions.

Heaped round the knees of the goblins lie the drifted leaves of more than one autumn, and among the leaves and moss and young uncurling bracken lay here and there a fallen monster, his green hair streaming yards out round his head, and his distorted limbs crushing the moss and tender undergrowth. And over these prone bodies the wood waved its lean arms and wrung its gaunt fingers in the young May breeze.

And now I saw her coming towards me across the brown carpet of the wood. And as she came near I held my breath, and dared hardly draw it lest the touchwood should crumble and betray me to her. Yet I longed to crouch closer lest she should see me.

But she looked neither to the right nor the left. She went straight to the wishing-tree. And now I saw that I had never seen her. This was not the face I knew, radiant, perverse, alluring, with the consciousness of power, the confidence of mastery. This was the sad little face, earnest, too, in its sadness, of one who has not that which is more desired than all things in the world.

She stood in the tree now and I could not see her, but after a moment I heard her voice, and then I perceived that that too I now knew for the first time. It had no longer its bright half-mocking half-tender tone; it was steady and quiet and it had in it a note as of tears.

"I wish he would love me again!" she said. My heart leaped up. Oh, all unworthy as I was, I would go to her that evening and tell her all.

"I wish he would love me again!"

The voice shook a little, and my heart sank sick with shame that I had spied on her. This afternoon I would tell her, and implore her pardon.

"I wish he would love me again!"

And this time the words were almost whispered. I think she had not known how hard it would be to speak out her heart's desire even to the echoes of the Goblin Wood.

There was a little silence, and she stepped out from the other side of her tree. But her last whisper had compelled me from mine. This evening? this afternoon?—when there was no hour in all the years but this? So that when she passed out of her tree and turned homeward to meet her heart's desire, God was good to me and laid my heart's desire in my arms!

The dew was all dried and the blinds were all drawn up as we went back along the village street and up through the scented yellow wallflowers and the browning lilacs of her garden. The face she wore in the woods and the voice she spoke with there had hidden themselves behind the dear face and voice I knew so well.

"You know," she said, "I ought to be very angry with you. What right had you to go to Goblin Wood at all? It is not *your* birthday."

"Not my birthday," I echoed. "My years may date from a winter day, but my real birthday is in May—the birthday of my heart's desire."

"I see," she said as we parted. And she turned at the door to say over her shoulder, "So my birthday must be in December!"





BY JOHN MILLS.

*Illustrated by* WARWICK GOBLE.

many noble but impoverished matrons with unmarried daughters.

He had a luxurious crop of fiery hair, a pale face, and a very long, sharp nose—a nose denoting something extraordinary in his character. His legs were not straight lines, they were arcs of circles, regular geometrical curves enclosing a space which, as Euclid tells us, two straight lines can never do. George while at college was as erratic as a comet. He never could submit to the constraint of routine, and move around those shining lights, the professors, as a planet moves round the sun; so, like an erratic comet, he glanced off at a tangent and rambled at his own sweet will in the illimitable byways of science.

He wore no appendage at the end of his name, although he remained at Cambridge seven years! When he came away he left the degree behind at the university to wait till called for. George always declared that he didn't care a rap for degrees; it was like ticketing good, bad and indifferent cloth all at one uniform price, and he didn't care to be labelled in that way.

"Degrees, my dear Wilson," he used to say, "are all very well in their way, you know, and no doubt they are very useful to lots of fellows; but they are not brains, and



**I**KNEW George Stanford as a pensioner at Cambridge University. While I was delving deep into the mysteries of jurisprudence he was groping his way in the dark domains of research in the Cavendish Laboratory. George was not exactly handsome; one can only say that he was bi-polar, like a magnet; he attracted and repelled at the same time. His open-handed liberality, good fellowship, and versatile conversation—for he was a brilliant and effusive talker—formed an irresistible combination of attractions to those who, like myself, knew him intimately, while a peculiar disposition of his eyes, which rendered the object of his gaze problematical, often at first sight proved repellent. He was no great favourite with the fair sex, in spite of the fact that he was the snect-anchor of



in this world of jealously-guarded self-interests I think brains will serve me better than a degree."

We were in the smoking-room of his house, or rather mansion, at Malcomdene, and were seated in wicker chairs puffing out blue wreaths of smoke in contented silence before a small table on which were glasses and decanters. Overhead hung a triplet of incandescent lamps, the mellow radiance of which encircled us like a halo on that murky November night.

It was my custom to thus spend one or more evenings a week with my old college chum, and as George was a great talker and I a pretty good listener, the mutual bond of friendship between us grew stronger as years rolled on. Among the millions of inhabitants of this world there are too many talkers—miserable triflers—and far too few listeners. But I never found that I was the loser by cultivating the appreciative qualities of a patient listener while under the spell of George's entertaining conversation, and consequently I naturally enough gravitated to his fireside in my spare moments.

It would however be an injustice to my friend to let it be supposed that he talked merely for the pleasure of hearing the sweet music of his own voice, or that he was at any time so weak as to descend to the low level of a mere twaddler. George Stanford was a genius in his way, and had ideas. It is to trace the development of one of his ideas that I pen these lines.

I should explain that my host, a bachelor, was a man of unusually large pecuniary resources, who spent his time and substance, and amused himself at the same time, in all sorts of odd schemes for increasing his wealth; but it sometimes turned out that while he secured an agreeable pastime the emoluments were a negative quantity—a good deal less than nothing. Yet all these, to him, trifling losses were but as a pinch of salt, a condiment to a wholesome dinner, compared with one or two tremendously big hits which he made during his lifetime.

My friend, though a desultory and empirical sort of dabbler in science, was in possession of a surprising amount of out-of-the-way knowledge of a practical kind, and for a subject to interest him it must always have some utilitarian aspect.

"By the way, Wilson, do you happen to know Pictet, of Geneva, and Cailletet, of Paris?" said George, breaking the silence.

"Never even heard their names before!"

"Ah! of course. I forgot you don't dabble in chemistry. What a pity!"

"I have no particular liking for the subject, and indeed I get on well enough without it. But what of these men, Pictet and Kailatay, as you call them?"

"Well, as I was going to tell you, these foreigners once put me on the scent of something which I thought would turn out to be a mine of wealth—a veritable El-dorado."

"Oh!"

"Ay; a fabulous fortune stared me in the face—came home to my very door and looked in."

"You don't say so, George! Then why didn't you slip outside and push it indoors?"

"I might just as well have tried to force a camel through the eye of a needle."

"Really! Pictet and Kailatay must have been awfully dense, I should think, to give themselves away like that."

"Dear me, no! I didn't mean that. But I ought to have told you that I conceived the idea by reading Pictet and Cailletet's writings. See?"

"Oh! it wasn't an actual gold mine then? Only an idea!"

"That's it! an idea—an idea!"

"Hum! But of course, now I think of it, ideas are just as good as nuggets of gold sometimes. Did you make anything out of it?"

"A great deal more than I bargained for, I can tell you," said he, as he leisurely refilled his pipe from the tobacco jar on the table.

"Help—self—cigars. I like—pipe," said he intermittently between the puffs as he lit up. "Make yourself comfortable and I'll tell you a story embodying one of the most remarkable incidents in my life."

I knew in a moment, by the twinkle of his eyes and the blissful smile upon his face, that there was a treat in store, so I roused myself and prepared for what was coming. I give the story as nearly as I can in the exact words which passed between us, and its plausibility or the reverse must therefore be reckoned to him. Truth to tell I used to half suspect sometimes that he took advantage of my ignorance of things scientific merely for the sake of diverting himself. Still I am by no means certain of this; neither indeed do I greatly care, for his stories beguiled the time pleasantly enough, and that was all I wanted. He was altogether too hard a nut for me to crack, and to catch him napping one would have needed the faculty to see round a corner.

"Now, Wilson, listen to my tale," said Stanford as he sat back in his chair, one



leg thrown over the other. "Pictet and Cailletet, those two foreigners we were talking about, have shown us how to transform the air we breathe into a liquid and even a solid on a small scale, but so far as I know they never made any practical use of it. You know, Wilson, I always like to take advantage of new discoveries and make money out of them. I've told you that before, many a time?"

"So you have, and I think it is a very proper attitude. Personally I can't see any sense at all in spending time and money on such mental gymnastics unless the products are to be of use to somebody."

"Well, when I first heard the news—it is a long time ago now—I at once began to con over in my mind ways and means for doing on a large scale—by the ton in fact—what these men had done by the fraction of an ounce, and I succeeded even beyond my most sanguine expectations. As a matter of fact I manufactured solid air, as ice is made commercially, and I turned it out in quantities such as Pictet and Cailletet probably never dreamed of."

"That's the grand idea then, is it? The atmosphere is your fabulous gold mine—your El-dorado?"

"Certainly! Why not?"

"Oh, don't ask me, George. If you say so I am content; but I see no sort of market for such commodities, and a market is indispensable if you're to make a commercial success out of it. Anyway that's my notion of business."

"You might just as well say: 'Solid ice! Of what use can it be?' Air, my dear Wilson, is just as essential to life and its needs as is water. But of course your question is quite natural, and it's the very same that I put to myself. You see when I'd got the stuff I was just in the same fix that you're in now, I didn't know what to do with it; but I put my thinking cap on and an idea came in a little while, and more followed quickstep on the heels of one another, so that in almost no time I had quite a family of them!"

"Draw it mild, old fellow!" I remarked.

"Bless you, there is nothing like ideas for breeding!" he replied. "The fecundity of ideas is something tremendous! If you've got one idea as a nest egg to start with you may raise up a whole community directly."

"Well I never had much to do with ideas. You astonish me. But I'm only a plain formal lawyer, and so can't be expected to know these things."

"I started at the beginning, thus: Solid air is very cold, extremely cold, and the first inference was that if a quantity of ice, on account of its cooling properties, would serve some useful purpose, then a much smaller bulk of solid air, at a temperature of about 140 degrees below that of the ice, would serve as a substitute for the ice. See?"

"Clearly: that would be a distinct advantage; it's getting the full value of the cooling properties into a smaller space, like exchanging twenty shillings for a sovereign. I understand."

"Well then it was pretty plain sailing for certain adaptations of the solid air in place of ice. All I had to do was to have it moulded into the form of small pellets as a cooler for all sorts of drinks. Instead of having your tumbler half filled with ice you put in a pellet of solid air. You see it's neater, handier, and altogether more in keeping with advanced civilisation than the old-fashioned way. Just fancy the way in which ice-venders tug and sweat and swear over the unwieldy and slippery blocks of ice which they deliver at restaurants and shops! All that has become ancient history to me. Then you must understand there is a vast storehouse of material for which there is nothing to pay, not even taxes. Air is always accessible without the construction of reservoirs, pipes, and the like. Then again, it would be a great convenience to millions of people to have a seaside atmosphere packed up and brought to their homes by carrier or by parcels-post. You might have air from the sunny South, and air from any climate whatsoever, charged with varying proportions of ozone, for the use of invalids. Its use in this way would be something after the fashion of putting sea-salt in your bath to get the advantages of sea-bathing at your own home. As a household commodity in summer its use can scarcely be over-estimated as a butter cooler, preventive of the putrefaction of meat, and so on. But curiously enough the most extraordinary idea was forced upon me one day without any effort on my part. As often happens in research work, while you are looking for one thing you are apt to stumble across another.

"Now look at this," he continued, reaching down a photograph from the mantelpiece; "it is a view of the enormous engine and other accessories by means of which I manufacture solid air. Here is a receiver into which the air is forced at a tremendous pressure, many hundred atmospheres, and these pumps, communicating with monster





"Passing up before my eyes like mist."

this means, as the engine works, the great pressure of the piston on the enclosed air in the receiver and the low temperature of the very cold vapours around it act in unison and co-operate in forcing the air into a solid mass. You see here at intervals a strong valve opens at the extremity of the receiver and an elongated rectangular solid mass of air emerges. In fact I can in this way produce three thousand such blocks per hour."

"Why, bless me! It looks for all the world like a brick!"

"That's just what I thought when I first saw it, though in designing the receiver I never dreamt of bricks at all. It was a mere accident—a freak of fate!"

"Great Scott! George, we shall be having real air castles!"

"It struck me that way, I can tell you, and it was then that I thought I saw a big fortune looking in at the door, as I told you. I began to think it over. In the first place it was clear there would be no digging for the material to make the air-bricks; no expense in cartage, fetching and carrying from the clay-pits, because the air is always here. I saw too that there would

reservoirs containing volatile liquids, draw off the intensely cold vapour into this steel jacket which surrounds the receiver. By

be little expense, comparatively speaking, in the plant; nothing but a powerful engine to work the pumps, and the bricks could be



pushed out *ad infinitum*, and would only require piling up in the brickyard. Then the volatile liquids for producing the necessary low temperature could be used over and over again, with scarcely any waste, as they could be condensed after use and returned direct to the reservoirs. Understand?"

"I can only say that it is simply and truly marvellous!"

"Do you know, Alec, I never could forgive myself for being so dense as not to have foreseen this remarkable result, unaided by chance. It's galling to me when I think that the sight of that brick-like solid put me on the track. But I always do put things in their true light, and never annex anything, as the result of my own ingenuity, which drops down on me as from the clouds in that way."

"It certainly does rub some of the guilt off, but for all that it's a clever conception."

"I'm glad you think so, for I am not insensible to those feelings of affection and pride which a man generally entertains towards the offspring of his intellect. You must understand however that something remained to be done before those bricks could be of any use as building material. In the first place they were so cold that they burnt you like red-hot iron when you touched them, at least the sensation was the same. I can't explain it. It's one of nature's paradoxes. Again, the bricks took a fancy to the habit of growing beautifully less and less and finally lifted themselves back again into the atmosphere, passing up before my eyes like mist before the rising sun."

"Ah! that's awkward."

"Awkward indeed; but I got over it. I found a substance, which I named 'bindene,' which, when dissolved in water, possessed the properties of a cement in the highest degree, as I found that when the air-bricks were immersed in this solution they became as hard as adamant, and rang and struck fire like steel when brought forcibly into contact with stone or flint. So you see permanence of form was thus imparted to the bricks, and I may tell you that the constituent molecules were so firmly locked together by the bindene that the restoration of these products of solid air to the normal temperature did not in the least affect the form of the everlasting bricks, so durable indeed that they would have defied the ravages of time."

"George, old man, you're a genius!"

"Well, that's as it may be. When I found that I—one man, one machine, you know—could manufacture 30,000 air-bricks in the

course of a ten-hours' day, that I could teach the most unsophisticated to work the machine, and that there was practically an unlimited source of material gratis and always ready to hand, I began to view the invention as a thing of the highest commercial importance, and I accordingly set to work, and for a while I turned the bricks out at a great rate. You see I had the field—a world-wide one, understand—all to myself, and my point was to make a large quantity before the invention became known, because, although one may in theory protect himself, there are, in fact, always pirates enough and to spare nevertheless. So, as I say, I went in for quantity at the start and made millions, and mind you, Alec, there's a lot of air in an air-brick."

"I hardly know what to make of it; but I should think if, as you say, the air is so compressed as to strike fire like steel, it must be pretty closely packed. Are you still carrying on the business?"

"No; I found that in the interests of humanity it was my duty to forego that source of income. You know I have always made it a rule—a rule which I hold as sacred—never to encroach on the rights of my fellow-men, never to live on other people's losses. In the struggle for wealth my rule is to fight fair."

"Very laudable principles; but really—come now, in what way could your brick-making be detrimental to others?"

"Well, my dear fellow, there are more ways than one in which that question could be answered. At the time I speak of there was a very heavy rainfall, which proved most disastrous to the crops of that year, and ruined hundreds of farmers and others engaged in fruit culture, and the newspapers were teeming with mournful prognostications for the future. Speculating on the probable cause of this second deluge, some attributed the excessive rainfall to the large number of spots on the sun."

"Stop, stop, please! What are you driving at? Rainfall! Sunspots! What have these things to do with brick-making? What do you take me for?"

"I thought I was telling you. Of course it's a long way round, but I want to tell you the story just as it all happened to me. Well then, as I was saying, they tried to make out that the rainfall was all the fault of the sun-spots. Why, Alec, our Government makes a regular grant of money for the study of the connection between sun-spots and the weather, and although it is known that some sort of relation does exist



between these phenomena, they can't exactly predict the sort of weather we're going to have. But it is all done with the object of assisting agriculturists. In this particular year that I speak of nobody could make head nor tail of the affair, but as it was the general topic of conversation I began to interest myself in it. One day, when things were at the worst, the village parson came to see me, and he was in an awfully agitated state.

"Oh, Mr. Stanford," he burst out as soon as he was shown into the library, 'it's shocking!' and then sank into a chair like one demented.

"What's shocking?' I asked in amazement.

"My parishioners will be ruined—impoverished! This disastrous weather is driving me mad. Don't you know farmer Sansom has committed suicide?"

"You astonish me!"

"He has—this very morning. Bankruptcy and utter ruin were staring him in the face, and he has ended it all in that way!"

"It is sad, very sad. What's to be done? Can I be of any use to you, Vicar?"

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Stanford, you're always ready to help! In truth I called with the express purpose of asking for a small contribution to the relief fund which I have organised for the distressed in the parish."

"Name the sum you think necessary."



"They came out like red-hot blocks of iron."



"Well, let me see. There are seventy-five families in immediate want of food, which, at ten shillings for each family, will represent some thirty-eight pounds; then there are many others who can't hold out long; so to be in readiness I shall require about twenty-five pounds. Then there is the reserve fund, for which heaven only knows what will be required! Might I say five hundred pounds, Mr. Stanford?"

"I will give it cheerfully," said I, and took out my cheque-book and wrote off the amount.

"When he was gone I pondered over the sad news of Sansom's death and the general distress—which, by the way, was not confined to this parish. It was a year of agricultural depression all the world over, the far-reaching evil results of which it would be hard to trace out. After a time I remembered that a low barometer means, in a general way, a heavy rainfall, and I therefore began to note the daily readings. I continued to make air-bricks as fast as ever, and was struck dumb with amazement to find that the daily fall of the barometer, was exactly in proportion to the number of bricks that I made. It dawned upon me all at once that I was the unconscious agent of all the distress of that unhappy period! Can't you understand that the air I had removed from the atmosphere would appreciably alter the weight of the entire envelope of air around the globe, and so reduce the height of the barometer? Well, the air had thus become so thin and attenuated that it wouldn't hold up the watery vapour, which consequently came down as a deluge of rain and ruined all these poor families."

"Well, what did you do then?"

"Do? Why, I did what I ought to do. I stopped the machine forthwith and set about devising means for restoring the air to its normal condition. But imagine my consternation when, with all this distress and death weighing me down, and remorse gnawing at my heart, I was confronted with what seemed an insuperable difficulty of my own making?"

"What was that?"

"Why, the bindene had imparted a hardness to the air-bricks which stubbornly resisted all attempts at turning them back again into air!"

"Ah! that was hard lines, George."

"Hard lines! It was that and a good deal more. It cost me a fine penny, I can tell

you! Why, I tried all sorts of solvents—acids and alkalies, and I don't know what—to dissolve out the bindene, but they failed utterly. Then I tried heating the air-bricks in a furnace, but they came out like red-hot blocks of iron, totally unchanged. What was I to do? I was at my wits' end. Curiously enough, when I was almost consumed with despair, an idea came. I made a strong solution of the bindene, and to my intense relief I found that an air-brick, after soaking in this strong solution, lost all the adhesive property which the bindene had given to it. Then nothing remained to be done but to dissipate the air in the whole of the air-bricks as quickly as possible, and I tucked up my sleeves to the work in earnest. Of course, after soaking—no mean task, bear in mind—the bricks began at once to evaporate, but to expedite the process I had a large iron plate heated to redness over a furnace, and as the bricks were placed on this they disappeared like rapidly melting snow-flakes, keeping up a regular roar like a whirlwind all the time. As I didn't care to let the parson know that I was the cause of all the distress of that memorable year, and indirectly the murderer of farmer Sansom, I kept the affair to myself and worked at undoing the mischief, as far as lay in my power, by keeping at the furnace day and night for weeks, snatching a few hours' sleep at intervals when I could hold out no longer. I couldn't tell you the pleasure I felt as I saw the barometer steadily rise day by day. Up, up it went, approaching nearer and nearer its normal height as the great piles of bricks diminished, and my eye eagerly turned again and again from the one to the other. When the last brick was placed on the hot plate I dropped down just where I was in complete exhaustion and slept by the side of the furnace for I know not how long. After that there was no more rain to speak of for three whole months."

"You saved the crops then, George?"

"Alas, no! but I saved the world!"

"Saved the world? How do you make that out?"

"Well, had I continued making the air-bricks here, and set up other machines for the same purpose all over the country, you will readily see that in no great length of time the air would have become so thin or attenuated that no one could have breathed with comfort, and thus the human race would have been slowly exterminated."





"I dropped down just where I was."



ROBERT W. CHAMBERS, the author of the following fantasy, has earned the interest of the literary world in America and this country by a quintet of volumes. "The King in Yellow" showed that one of its sentences, "I belong to those children of an older and simpler generation who do not love to seek for psychological subtleties in art," was not autobiographical. For this strange collection of stories—lurid imagination run riot—betrayed the working of a student in that field of psychology which is so magnetic and so repellent at one and the same time. The next book bearing Mr. Chambers' name was "In the Quarter," a pretty but not particularly original story of bohemian life in Paris. "The Red Republic" followed, and is a far finer piece of fiction. All the horrors of the Commune are made vividly real, and the author's historical knowledge comes well into play. The fourth book, "A King and a Few Dukes," excited extraordinary attention from some of the American critics, but seems hardly so remarkable an effort as the New York press imagined. It is very amusing, but not great in the sense of literature. Lastly, we have had "The Maker of Moons," which strikes one as a series of "trial trips" on the sea of fiction. There is no doubt that Robert W. Chambers is an author who has undeniable ability, which may sooner rather than later place him high in the list of imaginative writers.



*From a photo by]*

*[Nageli, New York.*

MR. ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.

## THE LITTLE SEXTON.

BY ROBERT W. CHAMBERS.\*

*Illustrated by N. VANDERLYN and B. HIGHAM.*

A wind-swept sky;  
The waste of moorland stretching to the west;  
The sea, low meaning in a strange unrest;  
A seagull's cry.

Washed by the tide,  
The rocks lie sullen in the waning light;  
The foam breaks in long strips of hungry white,  
Dissatisfied.—*Bateman.*



WHEN I first saw the sexton he was standing motionless behind a stone. Presently he moved on again, pausing at times and turning right and left with that nervous jerky motion that always chills me.

His path lay across the blighted moss and

withered leaves, scattered in moist layers along the bank of the little brown stream; and I, wondering what his errand might be, followed, passing silently over the rotting forest mould. Once or twice he heard me, for I saw him stop short, a blot of black and orange in the sombre woods, but he always started on again, hurrying at times as though the dead might grow impatient.

For the sexton that I followed through

\* Copyright, 1897, in the United States of America.



the November forest was one of those small creatures that God has sent to bury little things that die alone in the world. Undertaker, sexton, mute and gravedigger in one, this thing, robed in black and orange, buries all things that die unheeded by the world. And so they call it, this little beetle in black and orange, the "sexton."

How he hurried! I looked up into the gray sky where ashen branches, interlaced, swayed in unfelt winds, and I heard the dry leaves rattle in the tree-tops and the thud of acorns on the mould. A sombre bird peered at me from a heap of brush, then ran away pattering over the leaves.

The sexton had reached a bit of broken

Along the stream, rotting water-plants, scorched and frost-blighted, lay massed above the mud. I saw their pallid stems swaying like worms in the listless current.

The sexton had reached a mouldering stump, and now he seemed undecided. I sat down on a fallen tree, moist and bleached, that crumbled under my touch leaving a stale odour in the air. Overhead a crow rose heavily and flapped out into the moorland; the wind rattled the stark blackthorns; a single drop of rain touched my cheek. I looked into the stream for some sign of life; there was nothing except a shapeless creature that might have been a blind-worm lying belly upward on the mud



"Some tiny dead pile of fur or feather."

ground and was scuffling over sticks and gullies toward a brown tuft of withered grass above. I dared not help him; besides I could not bring myself to touch him, he was so horribly absorbed in his errand.

I halted for a moment. The eagerness of this live creature to find his dead and handle it, the odour of death and decay in this little forest-world, where I had waited for Spring when Lys moved among the flowering gorse, singing like a thristle in the wind—all this troubled me, and I lagged behind.

The sexton scrambled over the dead grass, raising his seared eyes at every wave of wind. The wind brought sadness with it, the scent of lifeless trees, the vague rustle of gorse-buds, yellow and dry as paper flowers.

bottom. I touched it with a stick. It was stiff and dead.

The wind among the sham paper-like gorse-buds filled the wood with a silken rustle. I put out my hand and touched a yellow blossom; it felt like an immortelle on a funeral-pillow.

The sexton had moved on again; something, perhaps a musty spider's web, had stuck to one leg, and he dragged it as he laboured on through the wood. Some little field-mouse, torn by weasel or kestrel, some crushed mole, some tiny dead pile of fur or feather lay not far off, stricken by God or man or brother creature. And the sexton knew it—how, God knows. But he knew it and hurried on to his tryst with the dead.





"The edge of the wood was near."

His path now lay along the edge of a tidal inlet from the Groix River. I looked down at the gray water through leafless branches, and I saw a small snake, head raised, swim from a submerged clot of weeds into the

shadow of a rock. There was a curlew too somewhere in the black swamp, whose dreary persistent call cursed the silence.

I wondered when the sexton would fly—for he could fly if he chose, and it is only when the dead are near, very near, that he creeps. Once I saw a small brown and white spider, striped like a zebra, running swiftly in his tracks; but the sexton turned and raised his two clubbed forelegs in a horrid imploring attitude that still had something of menace under it. The spider backed away and sidled under a stone.

When anything that is dying, sick and close to death, falls upon the face of the earth, something moves in the blue above, floating like a mote—then another, then others. These specks that grow out of the fathomless azure vault are buzzards. They come to wait for Death.

The sexton also arranges rendezvous with Death, but never waits; Death must arrive the first. When the heavy clover is ablaze with painted wings, when bees hum and blunder among the sweet-thorn, or pass by like swift singing bullets, the sexton snaps open his black and orange wings and hums across the clover with the bees. Death in a scented garden; the tokens of the plague on a fair young breast; the gray flag of fear in the face of one who reels into the arms of Destruction; the sexton scrambling in the lap of Spring, folding his sleek wings, unfolding them to ape the buzz of bees, passing over sweet clover tops to the putrid flesh that summons him—these things must be and will be to the end.



"Death in a scented garden."



The edge of the wood was near, for I could see the winter wheat, like green scenery in a theatre, stretching for miles across the cliffs, crude as painted grass. And I saw a figure lying face downward in the wheat—a girl's slender form, limp, motionless. The sexton darted under her breast. Then I threw myself down beside her crying, "Lys! Lys!" and as I cried the icy rain burst out across the moors and the trees dashed their stark limbs together till the whole spectral forest tossed and danced and the wind roared among the cliffs.

And, through the dance of Death, Lys trembled in my arms and sobbed and clung to me, murmuring that the Purple Emperor was dead; but the wind tore the words from her white lips and flung them out across the sea where the winter lightning lashed the stark heights of Groix. Then the fear of Death was stilled in my soul, and I raised her from the ground, holding her close. And I saw the sexton, just beyond us, hurry across the ground and seek shelter under a little dead skylark, stiff-winged, muddy, lying alone in the rain.



"When bees hum and blunder."





A GLIMPSE OF DREAMLAND.



# THE OLDEST WORSHIP IN THE WORLD:

## A RESTORATION.\*

BY CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

*Illustrated by* GEORGES MONTBARD.



It is hard to say even now what the powder was; and as to whence it came, there I am pinned to silence. But the effect of it was undoubted. I merely took that one pinch, just to taste, just to analyse, and from that moment the years for me began to grow backwards.

I had dined that day in Bustamente's hotel with three most ordinary and most cheerful commercial travellers, and round us was the city of Port Mahon with its churches, and its anarchists, and its cobbled streets as they existed in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety-three. I put the powder in my cup of *caffè nero* and drank it, fearing nothing. The man who had given it to me I knew to be on the square. And afterwards I went out through the walls and walked round the harbour's end, and climbed the hills which lay above the deserted arsenal.

Night was coming down over Minorca; the warm red roofs of Port Mahon were filtering away into the darkness; and the lamp-light kindled in the windows of the houses. I could just see the raw outlines of the modern fort on the eastern side of the harbour mouth, and the moss-grown circuit of Fort San Felipe on the other bank before they were blotted out by the gloom, and then sleep came upon me. It was no ordinary doze. It was a strange new sort of sleep which gripped me and shook me like an ague.

At times, with a struggle, I raised my eyes and saw things in the staring southern daylight. The first time I looked, the harbour was full of shipping, sailing vessels all, of antique rig and clumsy build, sheltering from a tearing levanter which was blowing outside. And the place of the raw modern fort was a smooth green down. By the next time, Fort San Felipe had grown up into strength again, and its guns were sending spouts of red through billows

of gray stinking smoke. There was a land army at one side and a fleet of ships at the other, all firing. And above the smoke and through it I saw pennants, and St. George's ensigns, and the yellow and red flags of Spain in splashes of brilliant colour. It was Admiral Byng trying to relieve the fort, and earning the death sentence which was to be given him afterwards by an English court-martial.

Then I must have slept longer, for when next I looked out upon the tide of ebbing years Port Mahon was a small walled city held by Saracens, and besieged by Jaime the Conqueror; and whilst I winked that had gone too, and there was nothing but a cluster of dry-stone hovels perched on the bluff above an empty harbour. But as I gazed a ship came in between the heads, one-sailed and crowded, which worked slowly up to the beach beneath the houses and disgorged a company of unclad men, who had with them long-haired captives and bloated wine-skins. A school memory came back to me. Of course, they were a crew of those naked Balearic slingers who accepted service as Roman mercenaries and despised all other pay and booty excepting women, slaves and wine.

So sleeping and waking again and again, I saw the harbour empty many times, and the cluster of hovels at its head growing always smaller and cruder. But once I saw a Carthaginian pirate galley sweep quickly up the narrow water and ground with a shock which leaped her dry on to the beach. Men in trunk-armor sprang over the sides, and a wild crying of women from above spread the alarm. The stones began to fly, the naked slingers ran like goats amongst the cliffs; the black pirates yelled as they rushed to the storm. They gained the heights and the houses. There was nothing to rob, there was little to burn. Only a few of those who were helpless through infancy or age had been left behind, and these they killed. The terrible slingers hung like wasps on their flanks. Their numbers were growing less. They started to fight their way



back again. But a thick fat smoke rose up from the beach below, and with it came the shrieks of the chained oar-slaves who were being burned alive upon the thwarts. And

where the red bare rock did not show naked to the sun. Of men I saw no more, only heard the noise of them now and again amongst the years as they hunted beasts in



so, as their retreat was cut off, the pirates set their backs against a cliff and stood and died sullenly fighting, as brave men should.

But after that the harbour remained desolate, and the woods thickened upon its sides, growing on all the ground

"The naked slingers ran like goats amongst the cliffs."



the tangle of the ilexes ; and of men's work-marks there was no trace within range of my eyes. A thought seized me that by virtue of the powder I had grown backwards through



"I ran wildly away towards the heart of the country."

all the lifetimes of men, and was alone on the island with nothing but the brutes and the birds. The idea bit home. The horror of loneliness clutched at me in heavy spasms. I sprang to my feet, shrieking as the rust of

two score centuries grated in my disused joints, and ran wildly away towards the heart of the country, stumbling over the stones and undergrowth. It is an awful thing to slip backwards through four thousand years !

Once I had known Minorca better than I knew my London or Paris ; but now, with this awful inversion of time, everything in it was changed. The villages, the walled cities, the trim stone-girt fields, all were gone, and over the face of the land there sprawled a hopeless forest bedded in oozy swamps. Stags looked at me through the tree-aisles, monstrous lizards clambered along the branches, thorns ripped the clothes piecemeal from my body. I plucked small wild oranges from a tree, and prickly pears from a straggle of cactus upon some rock, and tried as I ate to forget that I had ever been anything else than primitive man. But that was a thing impossible ; memory still stayed by me.

Night came, and I slept under a great algobra ; day dawned, and the sun drew blue mist-wreaths from out of the marshes. With it also came a man to eat of the locust-beans on the tree above me.

"Eat also," he said, "and be quick about it. There will be no other chance of food this day, and it is still far to the Talayot."

"How far ?" I asked.

He waved his hand vaguely. He knew no standards of time or distance. Then we took each of us a handful of the dry beans to munch as we walked, and set off through the forest. My companion said his name was Og, and I found that we were bound to the greatest sun-temple of the island to take part in the yearly festival of renewing the sacred fire.

As we walked others joined us, men and women both, all of us mother-naked. A few seemed to dwell in caves, the rest harboured in the open, but all were lusty and well-formed ; and though some carried amazing scars on their bodies, there were none decrepit, and none seemed sick. They were a primitive race in the full flood of their physical strength, and they were going to worship the great mysterious being who swung through the blue heavens daily before their sight.

Our company had reached forty souls by



the time we came upon the bare rock platforms where the three great implements of worship were built, and we saw waiting there an assemblage of perhaps two hundred more. A score of others came afterwards, and these made up all the peoples of Minorca. The buildings were not new to me. They were destined to endure down four thousand weary years with very little change; un-bitten by the weather, unclawed by the hand of man. I had rambled over them at another time, had traced the great stone circle through a maze of prickly pear, had wondered at the duolithic altar uprearing from a cart-roadside, had pondered over the cyclopean architecture of the pyramid as it loomed out gray and old through rank growths of spiny bush. We called these ancient relics by the vague term "Talayot" in those days, and we bawled forth proofless theories as to the cause for which they had been set up, and as to the manner of men who had been their builders. But none of us had ever pictured the reality as it lay before me then; the buildings fresh-reared by the piety of worshippers at the cost of toil unthinkable, and the worshippers themselves living a thousand years before the first sceptic was born to plague the world.

There was no metal in Minorca when those massive prayers in stone were piled up beneath the sun. Each great block was toolled by stone alone, and smoothed by stone, and set in place by naked human hands. The courses of the pyramid grew one to a lifetime; and when they were completed, the capstones lay nine man-heights above the ground. There was an inner chamber which the priest-king alone could use, and around the flat top a high wall was built of the most massive blocks of all, entered by one doorway, which was guarded by great slabs of stone that ran in grooves. There was a sloping way which clung round the sides of the pyramid and led one to the temple on its crown, and all the place was milk-warm by reason of the sunbeams which swept lovingly over it.

The pyramid sat at one side of the clearing, backed by the hedge of forest. The great stone altar stood stern and square-shouldered before its southern face, sprouting out from the circle of sacred stones. But as to how the two huge pieces of that altar had been reared, no man then living knew.

Og came to my side and drew me apart. "No one knows you here," he said, "so you must be of some other part of the country.

Therefore the king wishes to do you honour, and you will be with those who stand beside him during this day. Have no fear: it is always peace with us during the time of the festival: come!"

We stepped out across the hot-baked rock, and climbed the sloping way. The stone doors slid back as we approached. Within were eight of the most physically powerful of the men, standing, and in their midst, seated on a stool of granite, was the king. He alone was clothed, wearing a tabard of skins in token of his office, and he was king because he was stronger in mind and body than any other man in Minorca. And because he was king, therefore he was chief amongst the priests also.

The grim bare walls of the temple shut out all view of earth and the things of earth. Within, we could see nothing save the gulf of turquoise sky, and the disc of sun hung in it, intolerably golden. With shaded eyes the king and the chiefs gazed up at this living, burning symbol of their God, and the king set forth in words the mysteries of birth, and life, and fire, and death. Then, with dazzled eyes, we went down and stood within the sacred circle, facing the people. But there the king's speech was different.

"We who have been in communion with the Sun," he cried, "have seen many things whereof it is not fitting that all should be spoken openly. As our faces are bright so that we cannot look upon you with clearness, so the knowledge that is in us would wither you to ashes were it given full utterance. We do not know all: even to us, the chiefest of His servants, our God hides many things; but to you, the vulgar, enough only is given to believe and understand, that ye may worship, and have fire and light, and not untimely die before your due season."

The people broke out into a rude rhythmic chant, gazing skywards as they sang—

The Sun-god rules the world; we are His servants.  
He gives life and takes it; governs us, the beasts,  
and the trees.  
He does all according to His own good pleasure.  
Yearly, when our spark of fire dies out,  
He adopts from amongst us a son to be His own,  
Who shall give to us flame again,  
And go to live as a star of the night,  
Leaving his mortal body stretched on our altar as a  
symbol.

O Great Ruler of the sky!

Each of us makes this his prayer to Thee,

That thou wilt grant him the boon to be  
taken up this day.

The chant ended, and the people spread





"The king rose up again to his full height, stretching out his arms to the Sun."



out shoulder to shoulder in a long thin semicircle against the ranks of the forest. We who had been standing beside the altar, the king with us, stepped across the warm rock platform and took place with them. And then a wonderful thing happened. From a cranny in the wall at the top of the pyramid there shone out a spark of fierce white light, like the gleam from a mirror or a diamond. At first it swung aimlessly to and fro against the tree-tops, but then its vibrations steadied, and its angle changed, till the gleam began to dally with the faces of us in the semicircle. It hovered and shot from here to there, now resting on one, now darting far away to another. It searched the king's face once, and then Og's, and then mine. O heavens, that moment! I felt as if some monstrous eye were coldly reading the secrets of my nethermost soul. I wanted to shudder and could not. Some huge force held me as in a vice, and I felt my features prim themselves up into a patient smile. And then it was gone, and I looked and saw it settled on Og's.

The light hung there, without a quiver, steady as the pyramid itself, and Og was drawn by it away from the line of the worshippers. Step by step he went forward down the path of the rays, with eyes fixed and mouth smiling, till he came abreast of where the great altar upreared itself above the sacred circle, and there the light went out suddenly as it had come.

For a moment the man drooped, and a tremor ran through his limbs. Then he straightened himself, and flung up his arms, and adored the Sun-god, and gave thanks to Him that He should have granted this thing. And all the people shouted.

The king and we others that had been with him before-time stepped out and went within the sacred circle, and the king lifted up his voice and made outcry in the accustomed fashion.

"The holy light has searched out the fittest amongst us, and he goes. Goeth he alone?"

A woman amongst the people shrieked, and a man threw his arms about her and tried to hold her back; but she broke away, and came and threw herself at the feet of the king.

"Og is my promised husband," she gasped. "Can I not go with him?"

"It is for you and Og to choose," said the king, and the woman leapt up and wept tears on Og's shoulder. But in Og's face

not a muscle quivered, not so much as a tint changed. Only he said, "Come!" and stooped and kissed her. Og was calm as marble, but the woman's body moved with shivers, and her eyes were big with fear and wet with love.

"Og goes not alone," said the king. "This woman, of her own free will and accord, journeys skyward with him. Their couch shall now be made ready."

He went to the altar, and by the steps which are cut in the midrib of the upright stone gained that which forms the table. Then stooping, with reverent hands he gathered up the dry bones of what had once been man, and dropped them clattering on to the rocks beneath.

"Our brother that was with us last year," he said, "looks down and sees. He cares naught for these whitened relics. Where he is now, the least of his possessions is worth ten of all this isle."

He took up his stand at the foot of the altar top, and Og climbed up and lay down before him. The woman also set her feet in the notches, and though stumbling often through her tremors, at the third trial gained the top and lay down on the stone beside Og. For a while she wept, and the king stood waiting; but at length she took one of Og's hands in both her own and pressed it to her breasts and signed that all was ready. Then the king took from beneath his tabard two knives of wood hardened with fire and drove one into the heart of each—beginning with Og—and left the knives in their places.

The altar was high and its top large, so that we could only see these things in part. But of what came next I could understand little concerning the cause.

The king rose up again to his full height, stretching out his arms to the Sun. His lips moved, but no words came from them, though sweat dripped from his brow with the vehemence of his prayer. And from above the Sun glared down upon him and upon all of us with an unmoved face.

Then a strange thing happened. From between the bodies of Og and the woman there rose up a blue feather of smoke, which flickered into the air, and vanished. A minute passed, and then it came again, and this time it stayed and grew, till at its foot there shot up a pale yellow tail of flame.

Once more the shouts of the people rang down the forest aisles, and the king, stooping, picked up a blazing torch of splintered pine.



He leapt to the ground, his treasure in hand, and we others, snatching unlit torches from a pile which lay upon the rock, clamoured round him to share the sacred fire.

The air grew thick with resinous smoke, and it rang with rejoicing cries. The Sun had taken Og and the woman to be his own, and to shine as stars at night; He had shown His pleasure at us; He had given us the choicest gift of all: He had bestowed upon us once more His sacred fire.

The people with the burning pine-knots in their hands filtered away into the recesses of the forest, and the chiefs went after them,

till only the king and I were left. Then I too turned to go, but the king stopped me.

"You are a stranger here," he said, "and therefore it is fitting that you should know more of these matters than is told to the common people. Come then with me till we have spoken of other things." And he led to the domed chamber which is within the heart of the pyramid.

But what he said there, and what he showed, may not be spoken of aloud till the people are fit to receive the message. Yet when that time is ripe, they will know for themselves without being told.







## THE GHOST'S "DOUBLE."

By L. F. AUSTIN.

SECOND floor in St James's Street," according to Barty Josselin's biographer, should be a haunt of fashionable dissipation. For some years past I have found it a very decorous abode, "a gentlemanly residence, by Jove!" as Meredith's General Ople would say, but decidedly prosaic. There used to be a black cat which waited for me on the doorstep whenever I came home in the small hours; but even that emblem of dubious habits has disappeared. My second floor is so austere that a friend who always complained that the atmosphere, the furniture, the prints on the walls, filled him with suicidal depression, sent me last Christmas the bust of a Faun, a wicked old classic with vine-leaves in his hair, and his features contorted by a very disreputable wink. This piece of *vertu* stands on the sideboard, and keeps up the wink with singular tenacity, though his surroundings must have convinced him long ago that this superannuated gaiety is quite thrown away.

I was sitting by my fire very late one night at the beginning of autumn. A clock, four clocks, struck two in succession, and I was wondering whether it was happy chance or a polite understanding which prevented them from clashing, when suddenly there was a tremendous pealing of bells on the other side of the street. I looked out of the window; not a soul was to be seen; but at that instant there was a burst of laughter, a woman's laughter, behind me, and turning round, I was amazed to behold in a chair on the opposite side of the fireplace a lady in a curiously old-fashioned evening toilette. She was young, extremely good-looking, and wore her black hair in very full braids on either side of her face, reminding me of an old print of Byron's Gulnare.

A nice visitor at such an hour! I glanced involuntarily at the Faun, whose features seemed to be wrinkled with a fresh and most compromising grin. Following my eyes, the young woman laughed again, and tripping across the room, laid her cheek against his. The picture appealed to my

artistic perceptions, but it was not to be tolerated for a moment.

"Really, madam," I said, "I must protest against this intrusion. A second floor in St. James's Street, though you may not think it, has a character to lose. You have mistaken the house, madam, and——"

"Hoity toity!" said she, in an oddly artificial voice, which sounded as if it came out of a phonograph; "I have known this room, sir, for a hundred years. But how you have changed it! Books!"—she made a wry face at the learned tomes which littered the table—"You are sad and scholastic, I fear, not one of the pretty fellows of my day. Still, that Faun——"

"Madam," I said, with dignity, "I must beg you not to jump to hasty conclusions about that—hem!—that object of *vertu*. I do not understand what you mean by a hundred years, and if you will have the goodness to retire——"

She laughed again. "Man alive, what a dull block you are! Did ye not hear the bells over the way?"

"The bells—yes, but——"

"I rang them! I am a ghost—such a very old ghost——"

She paused; evidently I was expected to pay a compliment.

"Time writes no wrinkles—hem!"

"On my azure brow! Very polite of you! So people still quote Byron! We died in the same year, he and I, and I have often wondered why I never met his ghost. We might have such games with the bells!"

"Surely you would not expect the ghost of Byron to engage in such an undignified romp?"

"Pooh! You don't know the ghostly world. We have left off all our classic airs, blood-curdling lamentations, and so forth, and taken to practical joking. It is so much more amusing than waking people in the night to tell them about buried treasure and hidden bones; that sort of melodrama went out of fashion years ago. When you have to be a ghost for ever, you cannot endure gloomy monotony. Now, ringing bells—yours, for instance——"

"Good heavens, madam! I hope you will do nothing of the kind! The valet who



sleeps in the basement will come up, and as he is a most particular man, the sight of you at this hour——"

It was too late. Every bell in the house rang with a startling peal. There were steps on the stairs, and, rushing out of the room, I met James, the valet, to whom I explained rather incoherently that I had become accidentally entangled with the bell-handle. At that moment his candle went out, and something rustled past me with the unmistakable sound of a giggle.

"Very good, sir," said the voice of James in the darkness with sarcastic emphasis.

She was gone, taking my reputation with her! . . . What did this mean? When I re-entered my room, there she sat in the same chair, but with a totally altered expression. The air of saucy mischief was succeeded by a grim stare from her black eyes. The face was much paler, and there was a small red mark on her right temple.

"Pardon me," I stammered, "I fear you are not well. If you will permit me to——" There was a little brandy in a cupboard, but I had a sudden doubt of its efficacy for a fainting spirit!

"What ails you, sir?" The voice was different too—much more phonographic.

"I—I was afraid you were not well. You were so cheerful a few moments ago, and now——"

"What do you mean, man? I never saw you before," she retorted.

"Really, madam, isn't this—hem!—rather capricious? Just now you said you were fond of practical joking, and you rang all the bells. Then you passed me on the stairs and laughed. James heard you, and as he is a most particular man——"

She sprang up with a cry which sent a shiver through me—the first ghostlike sensation I had felt since the beginning of these singular proceedings.

"It is my double," she exclaimed; "my deceitful, hateful double! Look at me. Am I like a ghost who would play the fool by ringing bells?"

She was certainly not. Her eyes had a cavernous glare, and from the red mark on her temple a small crimson drop began to trickle.

"Seventy years ago this very night, the man I loved came to me and said he had been ruined by play at Crockford's——"

"Now the Devonshire Club," I remarked. "No gambling there now, I assure you. I am a member."

"Don't interrupt me!" she said fiercely. "He declared he was ruined. It was a lie! He told me he was going home to commit suicide. I asked him to do it here, but he refused."

"Quite right. What would James have said? I beg your pardon. Seventy years ago it was different, of course."

"He swore to me he would blow his brains out at three o'clock. I said I would not survive him. As the clock struck three I shot myself. But he, the monster, betrayed me, and continued his despicable life!"

"A very shabby trick!"

"Is not that enough to poison eternity for a ghost? And now I have a double, a wretched shade, who makes me ridiculous, whereas I used to be respected! This upstart race of spirit-doubles has destroyed the old aristocracy of the ghostly universe. We are driven from our haunts by buffoons! I shall never appear again—never!"

I was irresistibly moved to offer consolation, though I had no idea what I was saying.

"My dear madam, pray don't take it so much to heart. The other lady is certainly flighty. She made most injurious suggestions about that—that object of *vertu* you see on the sideboard——"

Something pinched my ear violently. At my elbow stood the "double," radiant, triumphant, laughing immoderately.

"Ladies!" I cried. "For pity's sake don't quarrel here! If James should come, what on earth should I say? One is bad enough, but two——"

A clock struck the first note of three. I saw a pistol barrel gleaming against the white temple where the red drop had trickled.

"Not here, I implore you. Think of the scandal——"

There was a loud explosion, then a shriek of laughter, and I was alone in the room.

\* \* \* \* \*

Next day I remembered that I had read something about this theory of the spectre's spectre. Alas! poor old-fashioned ghost, how thy tradition is trampled on and derided by the Comic Spirit!



# SILAS P. CORNU'S DRY CALCULATOR

BY HENRY A. HERING.\*

*Illustrated by WARWICK GOBLE.*

“**T**ALKIN’ about inventions, did you never hear of Silas P. Cornu’s Patent Dry Calculator? You surprise me. It was a lot thought of in its time, an’ I guess if you’d come to Athens, Dakota, about ten years ago, you’d have made its acquaintance pretty slick.

“It was a cur’us piece of mechanism that machine, sir, an’ it was a credit to its inventor. It served its purpose, an’ if it ain’t in use to-day it’s through no fault of Silas Cornu.

“Maybe you’ve heard of the University of Athens, Dak? You do surprise me, sir! We turn out scholars there who compete with British graduates on classical lines, an’ beat ’em holler. Mythology flourishes there, sir, an’ if you want any information about Homer, or Venus, or J. Caesar, or any other ancient favourite, I don’t know a better place to apply to for pertic’lers.

“Yes, sir, at the time I speak of Athens was clean gone on the classics. Everything else came in second, with a big amount of daylight between; an’ if one thing was more disregarded than another it was figgerin’ up—math’matics, as they call it. All figgerin’ was put on one side an’ left there. Seemed to the head men of the University, sir, that

civilisation began an’ ended with Homer, an’ Venus, an’ J. Caesar, who lived before the multiplication table was invented; an’ if they did so well without it, an’ figgers in general, why shouldn’t we?

“It was a seductive sorter reasonin’, an’ the students took to it amazin’, an’ the same notion filtered down through all the schools in the place. All those who’d been conversant with math’matics tried to forget ’em, an’ soon there wasn’t a child in the city who did more than know his figgers from his alphabet, an’ even then they got mixed up at times with their 9’s and q’s, which air amazin’ like when you come to think of it.

“Of course a certain amount of figgerin’ had to be done, but it was fixed up on the quiet, so to speak, an’ folk were more or less ashamed of it, an’ if they couldn’t get a sum right they hadn’t the courage to ask anyone to help ’em.



\* Copyright, 1897, by Henry A. Hering, in the United States of America.



"Now Silas P. Cornu happened to call there one day for some objec's for the Tontine Museum, of which he was secretary, an' he was sorter struck by the difficulties the inhabitants had with their figgerin' up. He had been working at a mechanical arrangement for a long time back in his spare hours that was to do abstruse calculations with its

"However Silas seemed to think there'd be a run on 'em if they could be turned out slick, an' he no doubt saw dollars in it, for he put a power of time in the job. But those lograthums, sir, were tricky, an' weren't to be had in a hurry, an' Silas sorter began to see as life wouldn't be long enough to get the machine properly fixed up an' the patent registered.

"Now when he came to Athens he saw at once that although he couldn't get his lograthum machine inter workin' order he could easily rig up a smaller machine on similar lines that would do all that Athens wanted, an' bring in a fair amount of remuneration. He argued, 'If the inhabitants of thishyer city don't want'er soil their heads with figgers they've no cause to. Let 'em invest in a calculatin' machine, an' they can reckon on the work bein' done for 'em aut'matic'ly.' So he went home, an' in a few months he had turned out an attractive lookin' article—somethin' between a sewin' machine an' a

box-organ—as would do anythin' in simple addition for twenty-five dollars. For an extra ten dollars you could add a switch which would include multiplication, an' there Silas stuck. He couldn't tack on division or subtraction, no matter how many dollars you'd plank down.

"Still, notwithstandin' these limits, it was a tidy article, an' as soon as it was on the market Athens went in for it bodily. There wasn't a store of any size or a citizen of any standin' but had a twenty-five dollar Calculator. Most of 'em went in for the ten dollar extra switch as well, for when you come to think of it you can't get far, even with classical tastes, without havin' a multiplication sum on your hands now an' agin.

How those Athens folk managed without either division or subtraction I don't know, but I s'pose that people that air content to think about Homer, an' Venus, an' J. Caesar, an' talk in Greek an' gum-Arabic, don't do much in that line.

"Silas made a sight of dollars out of Athens, but he didn't do much with it in other cities. Outside that centre of learnin'



"An attractive lookin' article—somethin' between a sewin' machine an' a box-organ."

wheels an' cogs that no man livin' could do with his head, even if he wanted to—lograthums they called 'em. I won't say what a lograthum is, 'cos I don't know, but I reckon there's cities been built, an' nations riz an' fallen, that never had a derned lograthum to divide among 'em, so they don't seem, as you might say, absolutely essential to human progress.



folk weren't too proud to do their figgerin' up for themselves, an' they only heaped derision on the canvasser that called offerin' the calculatin' machine. But in Athens Silas did well. His Calculators were so constructed that they couldn't go wrong. Pretty well all accounts that came in were checked by it before bein' paid, an' no two machines were ever known to express a different opinion, either in summin' up or in multiplyin'.

"They had other advantages as well. They could be used as foot-rests, an' when you were not usin' the thing for math'matical purposes you could beat eggs in it or clean knives an' cutlery in general. He was a handy man at inventin', was Silas Cornu, an' he always put as much inter his notions as he could pretty well squeeze.

"Well, sir, mechanical math'matics hummed in Athens city for a considerable period. Figgers were at a discount, an' it was a long since a leadin' citizen had done a sum openly on his own account. Then there came a reg'lar bust up.

"James J. Jordan, mayor of the city, kept a big book-store. He had all the volumes about Homer, Venus, J. Cæsar and the rest, an' grammar-books of all the dead an' dyin' languages. He practically did all the sellin' to the University an' the schools, an' if anyone else wanted a book he'd be pretty well sure to go to Jordan's for it. Some biggish accounts were run up there, an' everybody paid 'em without a word when they bore the stamp of Silas Cornu's Calculator.

"It had seemed to many citizens for some time past that literature, an' indeed livin' gen'rally, cost more'n it oughter, but they reckoned that was the fault of the dollar an' not of the article. No one ever thought of doubtin' Silas Cornu's Calculator, for any two of 'em always agreed, an' if machines lie they generally do it by themselves an' not in pairs like human bein's.

"Well one day an account was sent in to the Treasurer of the University. Now it happened he'd only just got the job, an' bein' new to Athens, he wasn't above doin' a bit of figgerin' out of his own head. He found on that account an overcharge of fifty-two dollars. So next time he was in the city he called on Jordan an' pointed out the mistake.

"Jordan was sorter supercilious. 'Air you aware, sir, thishyer account was added up by Silas Cornu's Calculator?'

"'I don't care who or what added it up. It's wrong,' said the Treasurer.

"'Do ye mean to tell me that ye doubt the acc'racy of that machine?'

"'I don't say as I doubt any machine,' said the Treasurer, 'but I doubt this account. Add it up for yourself.'

"'I'd scorn to do it, sir!' said Jordan loftily. 'Here, Bowker,' said he to one of his helps, 'just place this in the Calculator an' ask it to be good enough to run over it again. It's acc'racy is called inter question.'

"Bowker took the account an' introduced it inter the slot, an' sure enough it came out at the other side with the old amount cert'fied as bein' correct.

"'Ye see, sir,' said Jordan. 'Peraps yu'll think twice before yow make an assertion agin which you can't substantiate.'

"The Treasurer was kinder riled by the tone Jordan took up.

"'D'ye think I'd take the word of an aut'matic candy box?' — he called Silas Cornu's invention an aut'matic candy box, sir! 'Haven't I got a head on my shoulders to do my own figgerin'? Do ye tell me this is correct?' said he, pointin' to the account.

"'I do,' said James J. Jordan.

"'Then all I say is you're an infernal liar!' an' bein' six foot two, an' broad in proportion, he left that store undamaged.

"Well, sir, he went straight to the Principal of the University an' laid the matter before him. The Principal took up the same line of argument as Jordan, said Cornu's invention was, like J. Cæsar's wife, above suspicion, placed the account in his own Calculator, an' there it came out with the same total.

"'Add it up yourself,' said the Treasurer.

"But the Principal couldn't do this, as he'd taken pertic'ler care to forget his figgerin' long ago. However he agreed to refer the matter to a neighbourin' university, which was runnin' strong at the time on math'matics.

"Well the account was sent there, and came back with a certificate that it was wrong by fifty-two dollars, the precise amount stated by the Treasurer.

"Well, sir, if there had been an earthquake I reckon the Principal couldn't have been more disturbed than he was when he saw that certificate, for the foundations of pretty well everythin' in Athens city rested on the acc'racy of Silas P. Cornu's machines, an' here were two of 'em not only lyin' but actually agreein' in their lies. However, before the Calculator was publicly accused he thought it would be only fair to write to Silas an' ask him if he could explain the matter.



"Silas came down himself in a hurry, an' said a mistake was absolutely impossible. All Calculators had been personally tested, an' were warranted for twenty years an' two months. They were weather-proof, burglar-proof an' mistake-proof. You might blast 'em to bits by dynamite if you were so disposed, but if you used 'em accordin' to his instructions they'd never lie—George Washington wasn't in it for veracity. However, he would inspect James J. Jordan's pertic'ler machine.

"So he called on Jordan an' asked to see his Calculator. Jordan wasn't for showin' it at first, but Silas produced a revolver from his vest an' handled it persuasively, so he was taken to the machine. Silas felt it all over an' examined the fittin's.

"'Thishyer machine's all right for calculatin' purposes, or egg-beatin', or knife-cleanin'. You've nothin' to say agin its egg-beatin' or knife-cleanin', have you?' said he, turning to the Treasurer.

"'I have nothin' to say agin those pertic'ler accomplishments,' said the Treasurer. 'All I say is it don't add up fair.'

"'We'll soon see to that,' said Silas. 'Jest draw out an invoice, Jordan, for that row of books.'

"Jordan, lookin' more or less foolish, sat down and penned it out. Silas put it in the slot an' turned the crank, an' out it came at the other side added up and cert'fied.

"'Now, is thishyer correct?' said Silas, handin' it to the Treasurer.

"The Treasurer sits down an' works it out. 'Thirty-three dollars overcharged,' said he.

"'Give it me,' said Silas, sittin' down to figger it up himself.

"I wasn't there at the time, but I have been told that Silas looked mortal bad when he found the Treasurer was correct. That account was wrong by thirty-three dollars.

"Silas was a man of action. He pulled out a pertic'ler tool from his pocket, an' in two minutes had the Calculator open an' was peerin' inter it.

"'What's thishyer, Jordan?' said he, black as thunder.

"'What's what?' said James J. Jordan, lookin' pertic'ler white.

"'What's this ile mean?' asked Silas sharply.

"'We has to ile 'em occasionally, to keep 'em in order,' said Jordan.

"'Air you aware,' said Silas, 'that the full title of this machine is 'Cornu's Patent

Dry Calculator?' an' he pointed to the letterin'.

"'Yes, I've noticed that.'

"'Why did you apply m'isture in the shape of ile? I spec' you know what "dry" means.'

"'I thought it referred to the character of the calculatin' work the machine did. Most folk call figgerin' up pretty dry.'

"'Have you read the instructions sent with each machine,' continued Silas.

"'Can't say as I've seen any instructions. Have you Bowker?' said Jordan to his help.

"Bowker shook his head. Apparently neither of them had seen those pertic'ler instructions.

"'Thishyer machine was in perfect order for calculatin' acc'rately,' said Silas to the Treasurer, 'so long as my instructions were followed. It's a dry machine, an' I laid pertic'ler stress on that in my instructions, an' I cautioned the owner agin employin' ile or any other m'isture. If you go opposite to my instructions I'll not be responsible for the calculatin' done. It's a pity, Jordan, you forgot those instructions,' he went on slowly, an' sorter fidgetin' with his han's. 'P'raps you'll remember this a bit better,' an' with those words he flashed out his six-shooter an' fired straight at him.

"He was a smart man, that Treasurer, at other things as well as figgers, for he knocked the barrel up before Silas pulled the trigger. There was a big globe of the world standin' on a shelf just above Jordan's head. The bullet went in at Australia an' came out of the Atlantic at the other side.

"Silas glanced reproachfully at the Treasurer, an' then seein' that Jordan an' his help had vanished, pocketed the revolver.

"'Let's inspec' some other machines,' he said gloomily.

"They called on twenty-five stores runnin', an' found twenty-five Calculators with their insides swimmin' in ile. Word got round that Silas was comin', an' the proprietors of those stores were not at home. Seemed as if they'd all been called away sudden.

"On further investigation there wasn't a single Calculator in the place that was correct in its figgers. It turned out that the peculiarity of the machine for figgerin' ahead when ile was applied had been ascertained pretty early on by Jordan an' his frien's, an' on a given day all the store Calculators were iled, an' a young man was sent round to the private residences to inspec' the machines there free of cost an' see that they was in workin' order.



Apparently he put them so, for they always agreed with the store reckonings. Out of three hundred an' forty Calculators in Athens city, three hundred and thirty-nine were iled up to the chin, an' the other one, evidently kep' for experimentin' purposes, had jest

been lubricated with vaseline. The power of that machine for summin' up in favour of the seller was remarkable. No doubt there'd have been a big run on vaseline at Athens if that Treasurer hadn't turned up.

"That did for Silas P. Cornu's Patent Dry



"What's this yer?"



Calculator as far as Athens was concerned, an' folks began to understand how it was their incomes had done so little for 'em since Silas's invention was sprung. They were sorry for Silas, for somehow all his inventions jest stopped short of complete success. No one blamed him that his machine wouldn't stand ile, but in future, save for egg-beatin' or knife-cleanin', they dare not use it themselves or buy at a store that employed its services.

"James J. Jordan an' thirty-nine other storekeepers were soon afterwards sentenced to three years' imprisonment an' a heavy fine for incitin' Calculators to perjure themselves, an' aidin' an' abettin' 'em in the act. A young machine iler narrowly escaped conviction also.

"Athens University was obliged to take up figgerin' agin after this disclosure. They hired a top-sawyer professor from the neighbourin' university to put 'em in the way of it an' start 'em fair. They knocked off an hour or two a day from Homer, an' Venus, an' J. Caesar, an' devoted 'em to addin' up an' multiplyin', an' now it 'ud take James J. Jordan all his time to get a red cent more for a volume than he oughter have.

"Silas went back to Tontine, an' soon after resigned his situation at the museum so as to devote himself altogether to his lograthum machine. He hoped that Athens University would take it up when it was ready. Maybe Athens University would, but that pertic'ler machine never was ready."







BY GEORGE HAW.

*Illustrated by Henry Austin.*

SOMETIMES, when the enginemen of the Great Junction ran double-load to a far-away terminus, the Company allowed them a day on the outward journey and a day to return, permitting them to put up overnight at some neighbouring inn.

One such inn there was, away out on the bleak moors, that was much beloved by drivers, guards, and firemen alike. There was no place so cosy as that; at no place were they ever made more comfortable.

Here one evening five or six of them repaired, having seen their engines put by, and sat down to a steaming supper-table. It was wild out of doors, so after supper they all assembled round a blazing fire of logs, and were joined by the innkeeper and his wife.

The wind without was in no mood to stay its rage. It was screaming round and about the ancient inn, as though demanding in tribute the railwaymen who had defied it earlier in the night. It awoke weird echoes in the quaint old hostel, till there seemed the tramp of ghostly feet in the rooms above, a wild carouse of goblins in the rooms below, and the moaning of spirits in sore travail in the passages and corridors around.

"Such nights as these," said the hostess, "always remind me of Meg Bellborough's galloping horses."

"And what were they?"

Well, she would ask them, did she look like a superstitious woman?

They all cried, "No"; the idea was absurd.

So it was, and she would thank them for their good opinion; but, say what they liked, in the witch and her galloping horses she did believe. Coming home from the market town all alone on the country road late at night she had heard the unseen horses gallop past her. She had often felt the wind in her face and hair as the team tore past. The most ghostly part of it all was that there was never anything to see. You could only hear the horses galloping and the witch screaming; you could only feel the wind they raised as they went galloping by.

Often late travellers on the moor by night, whether on foot or in a gig, had heard the galloping horses come racing on behind, and had pulled aside and heard them come nearer and nearer, and then, without seeing anything, just when the sound of the horses galloping and the screaming of the witch were at their height, they had actually felt the whole thing passing by them, and then heard the sound lessen till it died away.

Many a time had she and her husband been awakened by the sound of the galloping horses going down the road. They always



came that way, making for the Convent gates.

The railwaymen wanted to know what it was all about.

The hostess told how that long, long ago, when Meg Bellborough lived in the village, she was a thrifty woman with two fair, sweet daughters. The loveliness of the two lasses was the talk of the hill-folk for miles around. The great family lived in the Castle then, that now stood in ragged ruins yonder beyond Gay Bridge. Rumour used to say that the two sons had been seen more than once walking with the girls. Then there was a scandal, and the lord of the Castle sent his sons across the sea. When they went the two lovely lasses disappeared also.

And the hostess further told how that the mother was distracted out of mind, and how it came about that hard things were said against the Castle-folk by one and all alike, till at last the lord and his lady set it about that the two lovely lasses were in the Convent on the hill. Many believed it, and many disbelieved it. Nobody ever saw the nuns at any time, so the matter remained a mystery. But all the time the weak-witted mother would wander from Castle to Convent and from Convent to Castle, seeking her two lost daughters. She grew wild and strange with advancing years, till the hill-folk came to look upon her with awe and fear. She became haggard also, and people used to whisper to each other that she was becoming a witch. Before she died she made a prophecy in the presence of several people from the rock at Gay Bridge, that her spirit would wander between the Castle and the Convent till the mystery of her daughters' disappearance was cleared up. Once, at midnight, four horses yoked to a chariot came galloping down the road to the Convent gates. It was seen passing that inn, the witch driving and frightening the horses to a mad, headlong gallop by her screams. At the gates of the Convent the horses stopped, and the witch was found

dead inside the chariot. But through all the intervening years, generation after generation had heard the galloping of the horses and the screaming of the witch at dead of night.

"A strange tale, truly," said one of the engine-drivers, "but I can tell you a stranger tale than that, of a phantom on the railway that worked more frightful destruction than all the witches that ever lived."

"No man has heard this tale," began the engine-driver, in his quiet, deep voice, "and I have often



"The weak-witted mother would wander from Castle to Convent."

thought, mates, that no man ever should hear it; but it has all come back to me while this good woman has been speaking, and as it happened on another company's line, no harm can come of its telling here."

The little band of railwaymen and the good folk of the inn drew their chairs nearer to the fire, for the engine-driver's



face and voice bespoke a narrative of interest.

"It happened on the line that runs racing trains to Scotland in competition with ours. It is because it happened that you find me in this company's service to-day, for, try as I would, I couldn't drive any longer on the other line after the experience that befell Dave Brotten.

"Joe, my fireman there, has often heard me speak of Dave Brotten. A better man never drove an engine. Me and Dave, still quite young as drivers, were the picked men of one year to run expresses, and but for what I am going to tell we might have been running them yet.

"We were always the best of friends. We had been cleaner-lads together, and were both promoted to the footplate the same week. You can guess how we hailed it as a further good sign when they picked us out together to run the expresses.

"But I have wished many times since that they hadn't, mates. I have wished they hadn't, for Dave Brotten's sake.

"How he revelled in the work! If ever there was a driver that seemed not to know what it was to have nerves, that driver was Dave Brotten. Why, mates, he simply didn't know what fear or nervousness was. You know, it's an easy thing to run the fastest train without the slightest fear of any kind whatever; but to run without an inkling of the nerves now and then is a thing that very few drivers can do—of that I'm positive. But, believe me, Dave Brotten really didn't know what we meant when we other express drivers, comparing notes, used to discuss the feeling."

And then the driver told what a boy Dave Brotten was for running. The Scotsman was never late when Dave had hold of it. No matter at what speed he ran, it made no difference to him. Dave used to step off his engine at the journey's end as fresh as though he had just signed on for the day.

"I confess I liked the express work myself; but to run without the slightest show of anxiety, like Dave, was more than I could manage. The other drivers used to say the same. We chaps had to run the train just over a hundred miles, and we had to do it within two hours. Many a time me and my fireman hasn't spoken a single word the whole journey, the tension has been so great; and when we have pulled up at last and handed the train over to the other man, we have just looked at each other and brought a long, deep, thank-God kind of breath.

"Night time used to be the worst. When many of the passengers were asleep in the snug saloons, or dozing in cosy corners, me and my fireman's had many an anxious moment. In that hundred-mile run we had three hundred and fifty odd signals to watch, any one of which might flash out a sudden red for a prompt pull-up. We had to run through big stations and busy yards, and over any number of junctions and cross-roads, where we had to watch many other things besides signals in case of a mishap. When the mist lay over the land, and we were tearing through it at the same fast rate, fearful of being behind time, when we couldn't see a signal light until we were well nigh under it—that used to be the most anxious time of all. It was then we had to have the same faith in other men the passengers had in us. We were doing our duty by running through the fog unable to see before us, but confident that other men were doing their duty as well. We knew the others were doing their duty to keep a clear road for us, giving us a detonator here and there to make things easier.

"But neither night nor day running, clear road nor fog, seemed to affect Dave Brotten. Everybody used to say Dave was a boy for running. He was also the most daring man on the line for making up lost time.

"I remember once, when my own engine was in the shops, and I was running local passenger trains, I was sent out one morning with the ordinary just a section ahead of the Scotsman. The engine I had was a bit of an old tub, and she was running hot all the way and losing time frightfully. Before I got to the station where the express was to pass me I found I had kept her back a full twenty minutes.

"Wouldn't there be a row when the matter got reported? I, an express man myself, not to keep out of the way of a Scotsman!

"But the day following, having held out for a better engine, I reached the same station a quarter of an hour before the proper time for the express to pass. As Dave brought her round the curve I noticed he had slackened down more than usual. He whistled and put his head out of the cab, and I knew he had something to say, so I hung out myself to catch his words as his engine, bringing the train through the middle of the station, passed mine standing at the platform.

"'Saved fifteen out of them twenty minutes yesterday,' I heard him shout, as his engine glided by.



"What's more, mates," pursued the driver, "I knew he must have saved them before his first pull-up, forty miles ahead. He's allowed fifty minutes for that run, and to save me from being reported he'd done it in thirty-five."

"But if Dave was a boy for running, he had the keenest eye at the look-out of any man on the line."

"It was often told how he saved the express at Eddington. The signalman in the south-side cabin there is the only one

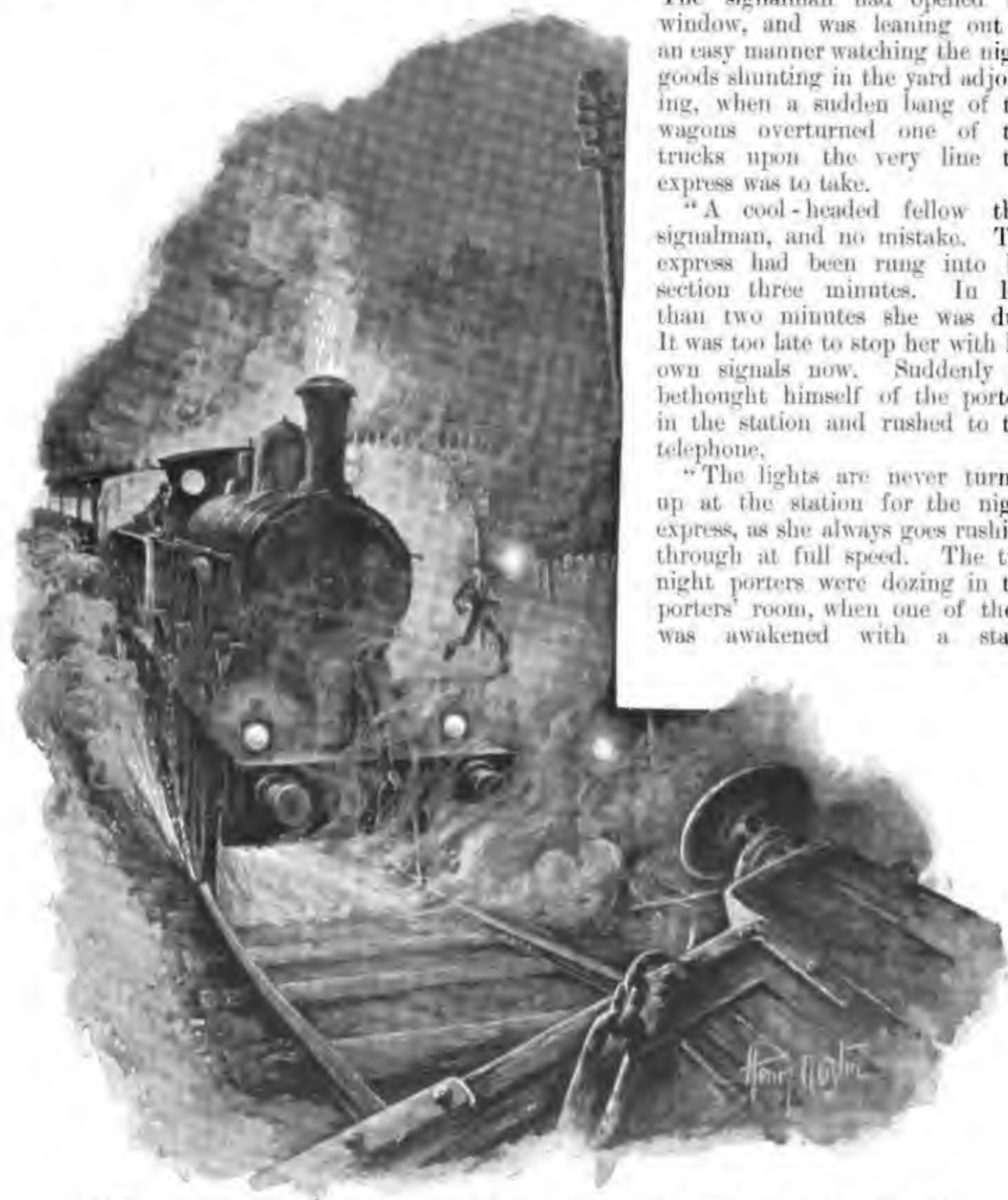
that stays on at night, and he is connected through with a cabin four miles away. At the proper time for the express one night he was rung up in the ordinary way by this fellow four miles off, and asked the usual question whether the line was clear. He answered back, 'Line clear,' and then came the reply, 'Train on line,' so he pulled off all his signals and knew the express would soon come rushing past."

"It took her five minutes as a rule to cover the distance between the two cabins."

The signalman had opened his window, and was leaning out in an easy manner watching the night goods shunting in the yard adjoining, when a sudden bang of the wagons overturned one of the trucks upon the very line the express was to take.

"A cool-headed fellow that signalman, and no mistake. The express had been rung into his section three minutes. In less than two minutes she was due. It was too late to stop her with his own signals now. Suddenly he bethought himself of the porters in the station and rushed to the telephone."

"The lights are never turned up at the station for the night express, as she always goes rushing through at full speed. The two night porters were dozing in the porters' room, when one of them was awakened with a start."



"There wasn't more than a dozen yards between Dave's buffer beam and the fallen truck."



He wasn't quite sure whether it was the telephone bell or not, but he rushed to that as by instinct, just in time to catch the message—

“‘For Heaven's sake stop the express!’

“He seized a lamp, and turning it red rushed headlong down the platform, waving it wildly all the time as the heavy fast train came thundering on.

“Dave had the train. He just gave a pop with his whistle to show he had seen the light, and clapped his brakes on dead.

“The train rushed through the station, every wheel skidding, sparks flying in all directions, and when she did stop there wasn't more than a dozen yards between Dave's buffer beam and the fallen truck.

“A thing like that never affected Dave's nerves in the least. But the day came at last, as I always feared it would come, when poor Dave Brotten's nervous system became a total wreck.

“Of the several accidents Dave had seen or had been in himself, nothing affected him more than running over a platelayer! He had to drag the body out from under his own engine-wheels; and then with a sad heart he walked up the line to the dead man's cottage to bear the news to the widow.

“With a strange instinct, and one which I have noticed before in the wives of us railwaymen, the moment Dave appeared before her at the door she knew his errand.

“‘My man's dead! My man's dead!’ she cried in anguish, and fell in a swoon with her weeping bairns around her.

“I had never seen Dave so much affected by an accident before. It was the first man he had run over himself, although he had seen several killed on the railway by other engines. In fact, I learnt afterwards that that was the fourth man he had seen killed on the railway that year.”

The hostess threw up her arms. “Heaven bless us!” she cried.

“You know,” said the driver, turning to her with a voice so quiet and sympathetic as to soften the effect of his words, “you know, it's only when you come to see a man killed on the line by which you earn your own daily bread that you can realise how it gets on your nerves. One case is quite sufficient to make you pray to be delivered from any such sight again. If it happened to be your own engine it makes the feeling all the more intense. Not that it makes you nervous, but there are certain scenes and certain sounds and certain movements of the engine that may have been happening at the time the

accident took place that always bring the whole thing back to you again. It's a queer feeling; it can't be described. But you know what I mean, mates.”

Aye, they knew—the other driver, the two firemen, the guard—they all knew.

“That was a bad year altogether for Dave. He would have got over the other affair, as we railwaymen must, but he had another accident shortly after which shattered his whole nervous system in a way in which I hope to Heaven mine may never be shattered so long as I live to drive an engine.

“He was running a light engine pretty quick, when another light engine from a cross-road failed to pull up in time and went crashing into Dave's cab.

“Dave was picked up unconscious on the railway embankment, and he was still unconscious when they got him home. Someone had to sit up with him every night for the first week, and one night I undertook to sit up. My wife urged Mrs. Brotten, who was sore in need of rest, poor body, to go along to our house with the bairns, and get a good night's rest. So I was left alone with the sick man. I shall never forget that night to the end of my days.

\* \* \* \* \*

“He seemed well enough at first and knew me. I sat at the head of his bed. He smiled several times when his eyes met mine. I turned the light low when I thought he had fallen asleep. For a long time nothing could be heard save the sick man's breathing and the ticking of a watch on the mantelshelf.

“Sometimes I would get up to feed the bedroom fire, always gently, so as not to disturb him. Once or twice he muttered something while he slept, and I gathered he was dreaming he was driving on the line again.

“I think I must have fallen asleep. I know when I pulled myself together the fire was out, and some distant clock was striking twelve. That was the first time in my life, mates, I ever felt afraid of darkness. I had either had a horrible dream or had seen a strange vision.

“Whether I actually saw it or only fancied I saw it, or whether the whole thing was a dream or a delusion, I cannot tell; but there passed before my eyes the white spectre of an engine, save that its wheels were red with human blood. I seemed to divine who the driver was without seeing him, and, fleeting though the vision was,



well do I remember how I seemed to say a thousand prayers that he wouldn't show his face. It was no use: I saw him put his head out of the cab. With a short cry I raised my hand to my eyes to hide the face. Too late. The face I saw was Dave Brotten's.

"I remember sitting upright in the chair with bated breath. The chill in the room was colder than any that a dead fire would cause, for it seemed as though I was out in the open night with the feeling of death in the air.

"Then it came upon me with sudden remorse that I had let my mate die. I turned to the bed—strained my eyes—looked again and yet again. The sick man was gone!

"He was gone, and I who had been left

in charge of him had let him go. I started to my feet feeling like a murderer.

"I heard footsteps below stairs, and saw a light, and went down.

"There he was, in his



"The engine—it's bearing right down upon me!"

working clothes, just in the act of putting on his coat, as I, with a scared look, stepped into the room.

"He raised his head as I entered, and nodded, then slowly stretched out his arm into his overcoat.

"Dave! Dave! What have you done? Wherever are you going?"

"I'm going to take my train."

"May I never again hear a voice like the voice in which he spoke to me that night.

"I'm going to take my train," the strange voice said again. "I know what they've been saying on the railway. I've heard them whisper among themselves that Dave Brotten'll never be any more good for the fast expresses. So I'm going to show them, Tom. Get out of the way, please. I'm going to take my train."

"It was a last hope: I asked him what train?



"Why, man alive, the express, of course! That's the only train for me."

"But the midnight Scotsman's gone," I said, "and the next express is not timed to leave here until six."

"He looked at me bewilderingly."

"Then I laughed—a laugh of inspiration, for otherwise I was fearful lest I lost my hold on him. I laughed aloud, and said jeeringly, 'Why, the man's turned out four hours before his time.' And I laughed again."

"He hadn't got his own watch, and when I saw him feeling for it I showed him mine. It was just after twelve."

"Look at your own watch," I said; "it's upstairs. Go and look at it, man, and make sure I'm not deceiving you."

"With the same wondering stare he let me lead him to the bedroom again. As he staggered up, weak and helpless, I wondered greatly how he had managed to dress and descend in safety."

"He collapsed completely when I got him to the room, and I put him to bed again as though he had been a little child."

"Soon he was sleeping soundly, and I felt thankful that I had stopped him from going out. I began to feel then that the horrible vision I had seen had been sent to rouse me and so save my fellow-driver from some frightful destruction."

"It was a pleasing way of getting rid of a nasty feeling. But I held to it. I held to it, mates, even after this more curious experience that immediately followed."

"The sick man had been sleeping but an hour when he began to talk to himself, at first quietly and with long pauses, but soon rapidly and loudly, till I became alarmed."

"In his sleep it was evident he was seeing again the engine that had run him down and caused his accident."

"Now, hold back there, hold back!" he shouted, quivering with excitement. "Can't you see I've got the points in my favour? What? Will you come? Then we'll both run for it. We'll see who'll cross the first!"

"I tried to calm him. He knew me as I bent over the bed."

"Oh, Tom, Tom!" he cried, "stop that engine, will you? Stop her, man! She'll strike me at the crossing. There, there! don't you see it?—the engine—it's bearing right down upon me—it's crashing into me—it's killing me! Oh!"

"He sat bold upright, wide awake now, and clung to me in terror."

"Save me, Tom! You can save me,

Tom. There, there! don't you see it?—the engine—it's bearing right down upon me—it's crashing into me—it's killing me! Oh!"

"I looked to where he pointed, half fearful that the sick man was seeing the very same phantom engine that had deluded my own eyes earlier in the night. I saw nothing. The poor, nerve-shattered fellow lay in my arms exhausted until he fell asleep again. I laid him lightly on the pillow, and you don't know how it did my heart good, mates, to see how peacefully he slept."

"He awoke as the day was breaking, looking better than I had seen him look since his accident. He had some dim idea of what had happened in the night, and I told him all excepting the ugly vision of my own dream."

"Don't tell my wife," he said, with pity in his eyes. "Think how nervous it would make her, Tom, when I am on the line again."

"Ah, poor chap! He little knew how nervous it was to make himself."

"I was the only man on the railway who knew it, for he returned looking well and strong, and asked for his old work at the expresses again."

"But they should never have given it him. A man who has been through several accidents, from some of which he has got scars as deep and lasting as an old soldier's after many wars, has a claim to lighter and less arduous work."

"I alone knew the agony and anguish his work was costing him. Many a time have I pitied him from the bottom of my heart. Many a time when my own engine has been standing in the station when he brought the express in I have gone over to him to give him a word of cheer. Many a time I have urged him to give up the work when I have found him at the end of a long run with big drops of sweat upon his face which told all too plainly of the fearful strain upon the system. But that's always sorry advice, mates, to a man with wife and bairns depending for their bread upon his labour."

"I never passed him on the road without giving him a touch with the whistle as a passing note of sympathy. I never ran the express myself without thinking of the poor fellow who was running it at other times with his whole nervous system a total wreck."

"Late one night, some time after I had gone to bed—for I was timed to take the first express in the morning—I was roused by the caller-up man."



"Now, what's matter?" I shouted from upstairs.

"Why, thou's wanted to help the mid-night Scotsman through,' he cried from the street below the bedroom window. 'They've wired up to say she's heavier than usual, and is losing time, so they're going to divide her when she gets in, and thou's to take one portion on.'

"Of course I grumbled, and the wife advised me not to go; but at last I shouted to the caller-up I would be there.

"Thou needn't bother about th' engine,' he said. 'They'll run her round to the station for th', and thou'll find her there afore th'!'

"I hadn't been in the station long, and had just overhauled my engine, when the long express came in.

"I had forgotten Dave was down to take her out that night. He seemed pleased to see me, and when I offered to run with the first portion, he gave me a silent grip of the hand, sufficient to show that he knew why I offered and thanked me for it.

"The other company's engine hooked off, and I backed down and coupled on. We were soon sailing away with the first portion through the clear night at a rattling pace. Dave, of course, was running a section behind me all the way.

"At that time we used to do the hundred-mile run without stopping, unless, of course, we found a signal-board against us. It

wasn't often that happened at night time, but for some reason or other I was pulled up at Westlock Junction, forty miles out.

"I whistled several times, but couldn't get the board. I was wondering what on earth the signalman was keeping us back for, when I thought I heard a rumble behind.

"I looked back with a start. There, to my amazement, sure enough, was Dave bringing the second portion on at sixty miles an hour. I knew he must have run past the signals in the last section behind. He was bearing down towards my train as hard as he could go.

"The signal at danger in front was nothing to me then, in view of the more terrible danger from an awful collision in the rear. I flung open the regulator wide, but the sudden rush of steam was too much. The wheels slipped and wouldn't grip at all. The roar of the oncoming train was becoming deafening. I thought I heard



"We found him among the dead and the dying."

the crash before it came, I thought I heard the screams before they arose, I thought I saw the dead and the maimed and the piles of wreckage all together, and, worse than all, I thought I saw again the white spectre of Dave Broten's engine, with its wheels all red with blood.



"And all the time my engine was slipping, and the other train rushing towards me like the wind. I had barely begun to move at all when Dave's engine crashed into the end of my train with a sound the like of which I pray I may never hear again.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We found him among the dead and the dying, drawing his last few breaths himself.

"That you, Tom? It's an awful mistake, I fear. May Heaven forgive me! But don't mind me now, mate; see to the passengers."

"You see, he remembered to the last the railwayman's first duty—the welfare of the passengers.

"As I laid his dead form side by side with the other bodies, among the wreck and ruin of half a dozen carriages and his own mag-

nificent engine, his fireman stepped up to me unharmed.

"He read the question I would ask in my eyes before I spoke.

"I don't know what came over him," the distressed lad said, with sorrowful face. "The signals were on, but he rushed by them, putting on more steam than ever. And I heard him say in an excited underbreath: 'Save me, Tom! You can save me, Tom. There, there!—don't you see it?—the engine—it's bearing right down upon me—it's crashing into me—it's killing me! Oh!'"

"I lifted him from the heap of wreckage and laid him out in the fields in his working clothes, where the moon fell upon him. Though he was cut and bruised and clotted with blood, it was the peacefulest man's face I have ever seen in death."



NEAR EASING, SURREY.



## THE NEW HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT.

Behold the mansion reared by dædal Jack,

See the malt stored in many a plethoric sack  
In the proud cirque of Ivan's bivouac.

Mark how the rat's felonious fangs invade  
The golden stores in John's pavilion laid.

Anon with velvet foot and Tarquin strides,  
Subtle grimalkin to his quarry glides—  
Grimalkin that did slay the fierce rodent  
Whose tooth insidious Johann's sackcloth rent.

Lo! now the deep-mouthed canine foe's assault,  
That vexed the avenger of the stolen malt,  
Stored in the hallowed precincts of that hall  
That rose complete at Jack's creative call.

Here stalks the impetuous cow with crumpled horn  
Whereon the exacerbating hound was torn,  
Who bayed the feline slaughter-beast that slew  
The rat predacious, whose keen fangs ran through  
The textile fibres that involved the grain  
Which lay in Hans' inviolate domain.

Here walks forlorn the damsel crowned with rue,  
Lactiferous spoils from vaccine dugs who drew  
Of that corniculate beast whose tortuous horn  
Tossed to the clouds in fierce vindictive scorn  
The harrowing hound whose braggart bark and stir  
Arched the lithe spine and reared the indignant fur  
Of puss, that with verminicidal claw  
Struck the weird rat in whose insatiate maw  
Lay reeking malt that erst in Juan's courts we saw.

Robed in senescent garb that seems in sooth  
Too long a prey to Chronos' iron tooth,  
Behold the man whose amorous lips incline,  
Made full with Eros' osculative sign,  
To the lorn maiden whose lactalbic hands  
Drew albu-lactic wealth from lacteal glands  
Of that immortal bovine, by whose horn  
Distort to realm ethereal was borne  
The beast catulean, vexed of the sly  
Ulysses quadrupedal, who made die  
The old mordacious rat that dared devour  
The antecedent ale in John's domestic bower.

Lo! here, with hirsute honours doffed, succinct  
Of saponaceous locks, the priest who linked  
In Hymen's golden bands, the torn unthrift,  
Whose means exiguous stared through many a rift.  
Even as he kissed the virgin all forlorn,  
Who milked the cow with complicated horn,  
Who in fine wrath the canine torturer skied  
That dared to vex the insidious muricide,  
Who let the auroral effluence through the pelt  
Of the sly rat that robbed the palace Jack had built.

The loud cantankerous Shanghai comes at last,  
Whose shouts aroused the shorn ecclesiast,  
Who sealed the vows of Hymen's sacrament,  
To him, who, robed in garments indigent,  
Exosculates the damsel lachrymose,  
The emulgator of that brute morose,  
That tossed the dog, that worried the cat, that kilt  
The rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that  
Jack built,

—Duluth Herald.



ONLY NATURAL.

SCHOOLMASTER: How is it that your addition is always wrong?

PUPIL: I dunno—I get father to help me.

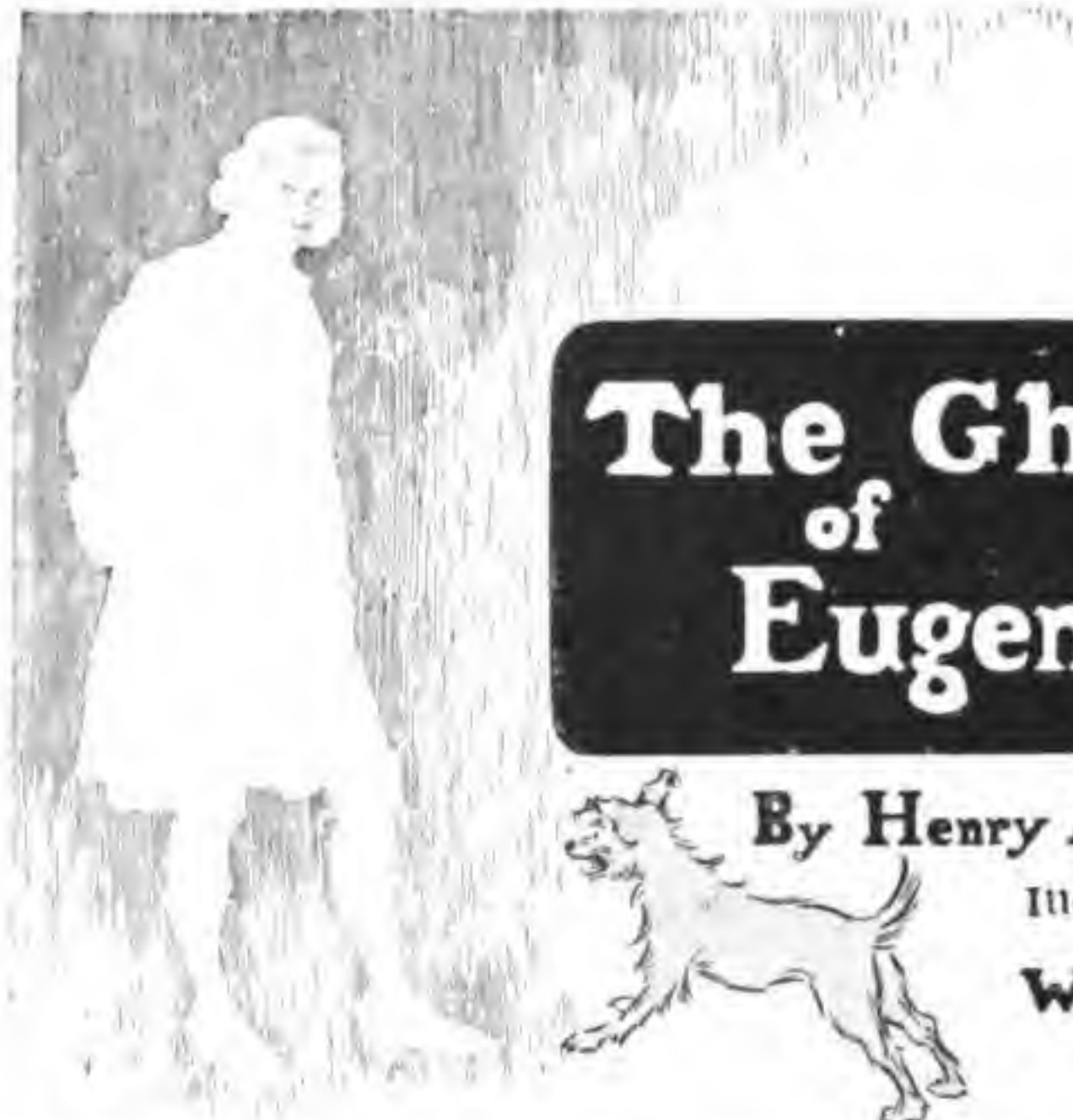
SCHOOLMASTER: Your father must be a remarkable man. He always makes the totals much too large.

What is he by profession?

PUPIL: A waiter, sir.

SCHOOLMASTER: Ah, that explains it





# The Ghost of Eugene Aram

By Henry A Hering

Illustrated by

Will Owen

**A**T that time I was engaged on my well-known work on *Druidical Vestiges*. I wanted absolute seclusion in which to arrange my notes and write my book, and I cast about for a suitable place. I was fortunate enough to hear of an ideal spot in the heart of the broad-acred county, on the fringe of the moors and the dales, and within easy access of York withal. The house was picturesque in itself and in its position. It was situated on the edge of the great reservoir that had just been made for some distant town. It was the old manor house of the district, and had been saved from destruction by the pleading of local antiquarians. It now stood on a little peninsula jutting into the lake, and it took my fancy at first sight. On three sides was water, on the fourth a delightful old English garden of sunflowers, box-trees, and yews. It was, I say, an ideal place for my work.

The engineer had lived there for the past five years, superintending the building of the works, and when I looked over the house he was busy packing up his belongings. I naturally asked him how he liked the place, and if there were any special disadvantages connected with it.

To the first question he replied that he liked it uncommonly; to the latter he did not reply at all. I pressed for an answer, and he reluctantly admitted there was a special disadvantage; and then he added inconsequently that possibly I might call it an attraction.

"My dear sir," I replied, "if I take this house I shall be here twelve months at least, and if I find anything objectionable about the premises it will totally upset my plans. I think you ought to give me full particulars, you really ought to be candid with me."

"Well," said the engineer, "the fact is the house is haunted by the ghost of a local celebrity. I didn't mind it when I got used to it, but at first I objected to it considerably; and possibly you might never get to like it."

"I do object to ghosts," I answered; "and I don't think I should ever get used to one, far less ever grow to like it. What form does this one take?"

"It is the ghost of Eugene Aram," he replied. "He was born near here and lived for some time in the house. I have never heard of anyone else seeing the appearance, and haven't spoken about it to anyone but you. The thing only came when I was alone. I didn't relish its presence at all at first, but I grew to like it. You see, I was very lonely here. Most of my spare time I've had



nobody but my dog with me, and the evenings are long. It's wonderful how you take to a ghost under such conditions. A man, a dog, and a ghost get on uncommonly well together in the country when they understand each other. Besides, Aram is wonderfully well-informed. He isn't a chain-clanking ghost. He's a man of talent."

"A murderer, I believe."

"I'm afraid so. Aram swears he isn't: but the best of us might do that under the circumstances. However, he's quite harmless now, and, frankly speaking, I'm sorry to leave him."

I carefully thought over the matter, and finally decided to take the place, despite the incubus attached. The engineer was a man of education and taste, and if he could stand the ghost for five years I ought to be able to bear the infliction for one. Besides, it would be an experience.

So I fixed up the tenancy, moved books and furniture there, and commenced my work.

For the next two months I was so busy arranging my voluminous notes that I had little time for anything else, but when at last I got them into order, and had fairly started my book, I thought a little relaxation advisable. I found this in returning the friendly visits of my neighbours. Only one of the latter interested me, and that on account of his valuable library. Mr. Leigh had no literary tastes himself, and he smiled at my enthusiasm about his possessions.

These were at once a delight and a sorrow to me, for they had been horribly neglected. This was particularly the case with the manuscripts, which were mottled and foxed with mildew, and thickly coated with the dust of ages. It was pitiable to see them in this condition. Illuminated missals had long since lost their colouring, and the Greek, Latin, Saxon, and other manuscripts were fast becoming undecipherable. Many of them were so already.

They were evidently spoils of the demolition of the neighbouring monastery, and the best preserved, and to me the most interesting, was the diary of a priestly Pepys of the fourteenth century, old abbey accounts that

would scarcely have borne an auditor's scrutiny, and a bundle of monkish love-letters—no doubt mere theoretical exercises to an imaginary divinity, but evincing undoubted genius in the *Ars Amatoria*.

Mr. Leigh let me ferret at will among these treasures, and from them I hoped to get enough material for several magazine articles. This research afforded a pleasing intermission to my Druidical work, which progressed apace.



"The diary of a priestly Pepys of the fourteenth century."

I well remember the evening of the day in which I completed the first chapter of my book. I was walking about my room, declaiming from the MS. in my hands. As I ended, expressions of applause came from the fireside. I looked up in astonishment. There, sitting in the chair, was the ghost of Eugene Aram.

Owing to its non-appearance I had long since put this down to be an hallucination of the engineer, and I don't mind admitting I was startled when actually confronted by



the apparition. However, I tried not to show this, and had sufficient presence of mind to reply to its applause with a casual "I'm glad you like it."

"I do. It's interesting—remarkably interesting, Mr. Smilax," said Aram. "You've a pretty talent for original research."

"Thank you," I modestly replied. "Did you ever do anything in that direction?"

"A little—just a little. I discovered a European affinity in Celtic roots, as possibly you remember."

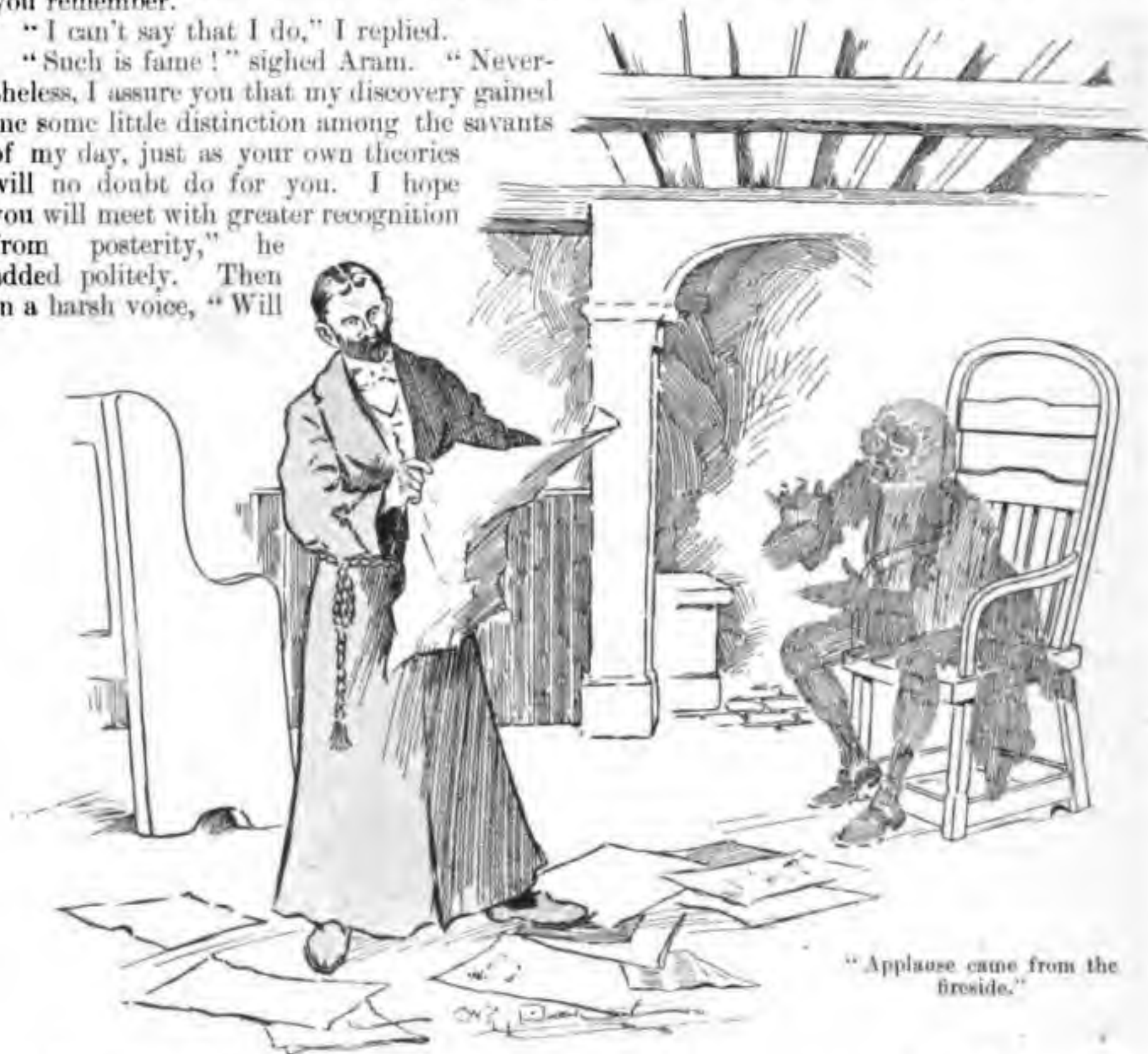
"I can't say that I do," I replied.

"Such is fame!" sighed Aram. "Nevertheless, I assure you that my discovery gained me some little distinction among the savants of my day, just as your own theories will no doubt do for you. I hope you will meet with greater recognition from posterity," he added politely. Then in a harsh voice, "Will

than that of your predecessor. In my own day a cur that snarled at a gentleman was——"

What happened under those particular circumstances was not forthcoming, for my housekeeper entered at that moment with sugar and hot water, and the ghost faded into nothingness before she was in view. Carlo followed at her heels, sniffing uneasily, and evidently upset by recent events.

From that short and inauspicious interview



you kindly tell that dog of yours to stop his hideous noise?"

Carlo, with bristling hair, was growling ferociously.

"Down, sir, down! Be quiet!" I commanded. But Carlo wouldn't. For the first time in his life he disobeyed me, and I was obliged to turn him out of the room.

Aram was evidently annoyed at his reception, for on my return to the room he said stiffly—

"Your dog, sir, seems less well behaved

began my acquaintance with Eugene Aram's ghost, an acquaintance that ripened into something approaching a friendship, and which threatened at one time to have a most disastrous influence on my career.

From that night forward Aram regularly put in an appearance whenever I was alone, and it grew to be a matter of course for me to find the intangible shade of the departed murderer seated opposite. Like the engineer, I soon got used to it, and would have regretted its absence, but Carlo never got



over his first feelings of repugnance, and nightly I had to eject him from the room.

Aram was indeed a wonderfully well-informed man. His knowledge of the classics was remarkable. In a weak moment I agreed to rub up my Homer with him, and he led me at a gallop through the Iliad. But he was altogether too deep and enthusiastic a linguist for me, and our first coolness arose through my objecting to learn Hebrew.

"You'll be sure to find it useful sometimes, Smilax," said Aram.

"I simply haven't room for it in my head, and I've no wish to learn it either," I replied firmly.

"If you'd prefer Celtic or Arabic, I should be just as pleased to teach you," he urged. "Or we could take up Chaldee."

"I don't wish to appear ungrateful, Aram," I answered, "but I can't do anything of the sort. I'm not good at languages. I only agreed to Homer to please you, and I don't understand half we read."

Aram sighed regretfully. "There's little love of pure learning in these days," he said. "I wanted to read Caesar's Commentaries with the engineer, but he used unnecessarily expressive language, and flatly refused. I hoped better things of you—a man of literary tastes."

I felt I had behaved somewhat unhand-somely, and the next night I strove to make amends by my sympathetic attention to his version of his domestic troubles, pecuniary difficulties, and all the events that culminated in his trial and sentence. He was so singularly able in his manipulation of facts, and so plausible in their interpretation, that he left me firmly convinced that if ever an innocent man was hanged, that man was Eugene Aram.

It was about a month after his first appearance that conversation turned upon Mr. Leigh's manuscripts, and the disgraceful state in which they were.

"What a pity it is they don't belong to you!" said Aram after a pause. "Leigh couldn't appreciate them if he tried, and he doesn't even do that."

"Yes, things are a bit unequally distributed," I admitted.

"Don't you think intelligent men should try to remedy the inequality?" continued Aram. "If I were flesh and blood I should certainly try to do so in this particular instance."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"What I said," replied Aram, as he faded away.

I went to bed that night thinking over his words. Yes, it was a pity, a great pity, those priceless manuscripts should belong to a country squire who didn't even look after them. What loving care would I not give to them, did they belong to me! But now they were absolutely rotting away. If they were mine, I——" And so musing I fell asleep.

The next day I had arranged to run over to the Grange to continue my excerpts from the manuscripts. Never had they seemed so forlorn. I was gingerly handling one time-stained piece—Saxon it seemed to me, from the faint indications of writing that were discernable, and mentally I anathematised its owner.

"A confounded shame, isn't it?" said a familiar voice. I looked round, and in the daylight saw the dim outline of Aram.

"Now, if I were you I should take that home, where you can clean it up and restore it, and investigate it at your leisure. It looks like a valuable original. You could bring it back any time."

He spoke so naturally and plausibly that I only saw the reasonableness of his suggestion. I could, as he said, easily take it away and clean it, and investigate it at home. Aram's help would be invaluable. Mr. Leigh was away, so I couldn't ask his permission, but I would tell him what I had done next time I saw him, and he was too good-natured to consider I had taken a liberty.

"Well, perhaps you are right," I said to Aram, as I put the manuscript carefully in my pocket.

I fancied I heard a sort of chuckle from the ghost, but on facing Aram it appeared he was suffering from a severe cold.

That evening was spent by me in removing as best I could the deposit of centuries from the manuscript, and by restoring the writing from a recipe of Aram's.

"Smilax," said the latter, after an hour's careful and eager examination of what was thus disclosed, "you've got a find here, and no mistake. It's eleventh century, or early twelfth, and it seems to be a continuation of the Saxon Chronicle—a Northern continuation, as one can see from the verbal inflections. It's a find that will perpetuate your name—or should I say Leigh's?" he added unkindly. "But this is only a fragment. You must bring the other sheets, and we'll work together at them. You'll have to throw over the Druids till we've done it."



"Nonsense," I replied. "What if it is as you say? This is only a philological curiosity. You can't expect me to throw over my work for it. I'm hanged if I do."

Aram winced. "I don't think it very kind of you to make that remark, Smilax," he said. "If you knew what hanging meant you would not talk about it so lightly."

"I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, Aram," I rejoined; "but I don't think you had any right to ask me to give up my work for something more congenial to your tastes."

"Well, perhaps there will be no need for you to do so," he went on; "but I hope you'll help me with this *Chronicle* in the evenings. It will be the first bit of real work I've done for a hundred and forty years, and it will be a contribution to history."

Aram spoke so feelingly, and his object seemed so laudable, that with very little persuasion I agreed to his suggestion, and each time I went to the Grange I brought away with me a further portion of the manuscripts. Much of them was hopelessly illegible, but there still remained enough that could be deciphered to occupy Aram with the evenings of three months, and I took down his translation.

I remember very well meeting Mr. Leigh on his return. I had part of the precious *Chronicle* in my pocket, just abstracted from his collection. Somehow there didn't seem an opening for telling him about it. At any rate, I said nothing. I told Aram that I hadn't mentioned the matter to Mr. Leigh, and he agreed that it was quite unnecessary to do so.

"Mankind is never corrupted at once; villainy is progressive, and declines from right, step by step, till every regard of probity is lost and every sense of moral obligation perishes."

So said Aram at his trial, and I can from my own experience vouch for the accuracy of his statement so far as it affects the purloining of Old English manuscripts.

Piece by piece I transferred the *Chronicle* from Mr. Leigh's possession to my own. There only remained two more to bring, when one night I said jokingly to Aram—

"Now, suppose Leigh came upon me just as I was pocketing one of these things. What would you advise me to do?"

"Kill him," said Aram.

I stared at him in horror. "You'd have me commit murder?" I said at last.

"That's it," he replied. "And you'd do it well. You're a man after my own heart."

He was just a little premature. I hadn't progressed quite so far in villainy as that. Perhaps in another week I might have been ready, but I wasn't just then.

Aram's speech thoroughly aroused me to the seriousness of the situation. For the first time I realised that he was slowly dragging me to perdition by his insidious suggestions. I was now a thief—possibly a confirmed thief—but there was still time to save myself from worse. I thought it all out, and before I went to sleep I had taken two resolves—to make restitution and to get rid of Aram.

It's simply amazing how easy it is to be good if you only try.

I just walked over to Leigh's the next morning with a parcel under my arm.

"I've been cleaning these manuscripts of yours," I said, opening the parcel and showing them. "I took them to my place to do, and I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all, Mr. Smilax," said Leigh cheerfully. "You can have them if they're any good to you."

"You don't mean it?" I gasped. "Why, man, it's a continuation of the *Saxon Chronicle*."

"If it had been the *Sporting Chronicle* I could have appreciated it, Smilax," said Leigh. "As it isn't, I'll pass it on to you, for you seem to get more amusement out of those rags than I should have thought possible."

I was simply overwhelmed by the gift. And to think that Aram had actually suggested murder for its possession!

"Aram," said I that night, "there'll be no need for me to kill Mr. Leigh; he has given me the manuscripts."

"Then all I can say is that he's just about as big a fool as you, if such a thing were possible," said Aram; and then he relapsed into moody silence.

From that night one thought surged uppermost in my mind. Aram must go, before he led me into fresh mischief. But how to get rid of him? I dared not suggest he should leave the place, for I knew he would stick more closely to it than ever if he saw I wanted him to go.

I don't mind admitting that previous to my meeting with Aram I had given very little attention to ghosts. I had even doubted the existence of such things; but I could do so no longer when I was in nightly communion with one. Naturally my interest in the whole question of *post-mortem* appearances was aroused, and I had resolved to go fully into the matter as soon as the Druids were off my



hands. In the meantime I had sent for a few psychical books, magazines, and pamphlets, and had discussed them with Aram.

I now turned to this literature to see if it afforded me any escape from the ghost. There was an article on Exorcism that interested me, but I hesitated at the services of a professional exorcist except as a last resort, as I did not wish to make the matter public property. Then there was a column or two



"The firm's representative."

on Incantations. I tried a few of the simpler formulæ prescribed, but they did not act. They only served to irritate Aram, who got the impression it was some Druidical rite I was practising upon him.

In the general matter of these numbers there seemed to be nothing that would be of immediate use to me in my difficulty, but among the advertisements one in particular attracted my attention.

"PSYCHE AND CO., GHOST AND SPECTRE

PURVEYORS," it ran. "Mansions haunted at moderate cost. Large stock of ghosts kept. An assorted batch of Crusaders just to hand. Send for catalogue. N.B.—Good prices given for ghosts of repute. Exchanges effected."

My heart lightened as I read this singular advertisement. Here, it seemed to me, was a possibility of relief. I had a ghost of repute, and if only Psyche and Co. would take charge of him I might rid myself of the incubus—might even be a monetary gainer by the transaction, judging from the terms of the advertisement.

I wrote at once to the firm in question, and in due course came this reply:—

"Archipelago Street, Soho.

"DEAR SIR,—In reply to your favour of yesterday's date, we are willing to purchase the ghost of the late E. Aram, Esq., from you if you can satisfy us as to its authenticity. As we are rather overstocked with eighteenth century *revenants* at the moment, we cannot offer you more than twenty-five guineas for its possession. Should you accept our terms a representative will at once wait upon you to effect the removal desired.

"We are, dear sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"PSYCHE & Co."

Agree to the terms? Of course I would. I wrote off accepting them by that day's post, and then anxiously awaited the arrival of the firm's representative.

He was a little man with large eyes, sharp nose, thin lips, and pallid cheeks. He seemed to be a smart business man, and thoroughly up in his calling.

"I expect to have no difficulty at all in removing Mr. Aram," he said in reply to my first question. "I have taken the trouble of making myself acquainted with his interesting career, and I think I can offer him an inducement to transfer."

"I suppose you will have to arrange the details personally with him?" I queried.

"Certainly; and as soon as possible. You say he appears nightly. If you will tell him this evening that I specially desire to make his acquaintance—of course saying nothing about my object—you will probably be able to arrange an interview. I have no doubt whatever of the result of one. I will stay in my bedroom till you call me down."

"Aram," said I, at a later hour, "a friend of mine has come to-day from London who is particularly desirous of meeting you. Have you any objection to his joining us now? I thought I would ask your permission."



"Deuced considerate of you, Smilax," sneered Aram. "Who is he?" Then he added suspiciously, "I don't absolutely object to you, but I might to your friends."

"Well, if you don't like him, you can—er—fade away." I replied. "But I think you'll take to him. Try him on my recommendation, anyway."

"Well," said Aram, after a moment's reflection, "you can show him in. But no tricks, mind, or you'll suffer for it."

It was certainly high time I got rid of Aram. He had never threatened me before.

I called for Mr. Vigo, who entered and

PSYCHE & CO



"At dusk every night they're off duty."

was introduced. The conversation began with the weather and the state of the crops. Finally Vigo said—

"Mr. Aram. Perhaps your friend hasn't told you why I am here. The fact is, I want you to better your position. A ghost of your European celebrity is simply wasted here. I know a place where you would be heartily welcomed, and appreciated in a manner befitting your eminence."

"Ah!" said Aram suspiciously.

"I may as well be frank with you," continued Vigo. "I'm the representative of Psyche and Co., of London, who deal in articles—er—gentlemen—like yourself."

"I know you," said Aram. "I've heard of you from friends, and it's little I know to your advantage. You make a good thing out of your *employés*, and yet you keep them short of pocket-money, and make 'em be in at dusk every night they're off duty."

"You are misinformed, Mr. Aram," said Vigo earnestly. "I assure you that any such obnoxious rules have long since been cancelled by our firm. If it were a question of hours or pocket-money, I'm sure we should be able to satisfy you. However, I'm not wanting you to join our stock. I think I've got a permanent billet for you, and one that will suit you down to the ground. One of her Majesty's judges—Mr. Justice Dormer—a hanging judge, as they call him—has just bought a fine old mansion in Devonshire,

and his wife wants a ghost for it. She has applied to us herself for one, as his lordship does not approve of the idea. Now, if you would take up your residence there, you would oblige a lady and have splendid opportunities for annoying one of her Majesty's judges—a hanging judge, I think I said. I believe you have no special reason to like them, Mr. Aram?"

Aram's eyes brightened. "You're right, sir; I haven't," he said. "I'll admit you have taken my fancy by what you propose. One of that kidney caused me a lot of temporary inconvenience and cut short a very promising career. I'd like to take it out of another. King's Bench?"

"Queen's Bench," corrected Mr. Vigo.



Aram glided up and down in visible excitement.

"I should be sorry to leave you, Smilax," he said, stopping suddenly.

"Oh, don't mind me," I put in hastily.

"We were getting to know each other uncommonly well, Mr. Vigo," said Aram; "and I was anticipating a merry time this coming Christmas; but hang me, sir, your offer suits me better! Smilax is only a poor soul, after all. I think I could do better with a hanging judge. I'll go."

My joy at this announcement almost overcame my politeness, and it was with difficulty I could fittingly express my regret at losing him. "You'll write soon," I said mechanically.

"Vigo will, no doubt," said Aram grimly. "And if I don't take to the job I shall come back. Hurry up the Druids, Smilax; and don't forget the Chronicle. Why, there are those last sheets I must stay to finish."

"No, no," I cried. "I can do them quite well myself. If I get stuck I'll let you know through Mr. Vigo, and you can run over for an odd evening."

"Well," said Aram doubtfully, "perhaps that will do; but if you make a mess of that translation, I'll either haunt you myself or put a friend up to the job. Stapleton Manor, Devon, did you say, Vigo? I'll be there to-morrow night if the wind settles. Good-bye, Smilax. Don't fret," and the ghost of Eugene Aram slowly faded out of sight.

A fortnight later I heard from Psyche and Co. that Aram had taken up his quarters in Stapleton Manor, much to the judge's

indignation. A cheque for twenty-five guineas was enclosed in the letter.

I now had leisure to resume my work on the Druids. I finished the book during the last week of my tenancy, and then I took a well-earned holiday, chiefly on the strength of Psyche's cheque, for from a monetary point of view the Druids were not satisfactory. I was in Algiers when I read the following in the *Atlas*—

"It is with extreme regret we have to announce the retirement from the bench of Mr. Justice Dormer, who has recently evinced undoubted signs of klepto- and even homicidal mania. The matter was brought before the notice of the Lord Chancellor, who at once recognised that only one course was open. It is deeply to be regretted that the once brilliant intellect of Mr. Justice Dormer should have given way under the strain of official work, and we can only hope that the pure air and quiet seclusion of his Devonshire estate will ultimately restore him to his former mental vigour."

I was sorry for Mr. Justice Dormer, very sorry; but he really ought to have had enough moral strength to resist Aram's insidious promptings. His case was indeed hopeless if his friends were relying on the Devonshire seclusion to effect a cure.

I published the translation of the English Chronicle in due course. It created quite a little sensation, and my friends considered it unaccountable modesty on my part that on the title-page was "Translated from the original manuscripts by E. A."

Now, for the first time, will they understand that in this I only did justice to a brilliant though unscrupulous scholar.



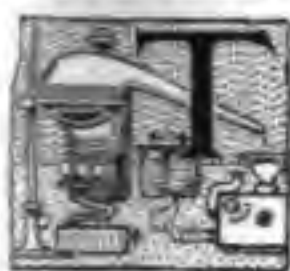


# WITHIN AN ACE OF THE END OF THE WORLD

being some account of the fearful disaster  
which overtook the inhabitants of this earth  
through scientific miscalculation in the year 1904

By ROBERT BARR

## THE SCIENTIST'S SENSATION



THE beginning of the end was probably the address delivered by Sir William Crookes to the British Association at Bristol, on September 7th, 1898, although Herbert Bonsel, the young American experimenter, alleged afterward that his investigations were well on the way to their final success at the time Sir William spoke. All records being lost in the series of terrible conflagrations which took place in 1904, it is now impossible to give any accurate statement regarding Sir William Crookes' remarkable paper; but it is known that his assertions attracted much attention at the time, and were the cause of editorial comment in almost every newspaper and scientific journal in the world. The sixteen survivors out of the many millions who were alive at the beginning of 1904 were so much occupied in the preservation of their own lives, a task of almost insurmountable difficulty, that they have handed down to us, their descendants, an account of the six years beginning with 1898 which is, to say the least, extremely unsatisfactory to an exact writer. Man, in that year, seems to have been a bread-eating animal, consuming, per head, something like six bushels of wheat each year. Sir William appears to have pointed out to his associates that the limit of the earth's production of wheat had been reached, and he predicted universal starvation, did not science step in to the aid of a famine-stricken world. Science, however, was prepared. What was needed to increase the wheat production of the world to something like double its then amount was nitrate of soda; but nitrate of soda did not exist in the quantity required—viz., some

12,000,000 tons annually. However, a supposedly unlimited supply of nitrogen existed in the atmosphere surrounding the earth, and from this storehouse science proposed to draw, so that the multitude might be fed. Nitrogen in its free state in the air was useless as applied to wheat-growing, but it could be brought into solid masses for practical purposes by means of electricity generated by the waterfalls which are so abundant in many mountainous lands. The cost of nitrates made from the air by water-power approached £5 a ton, as compared with £26 a ton when steam was used. Visionary people had often been accused of living in castles in the air, but now it was calmly proposed to feed future populations from granaries in the air. Naturally, as has been said, the project created much comment, although it can hardly be asserted that it was taken seriously.

It is impossible at this time, because of the absence of exact data, to pass judgment on the conflicting claims of Sir William Crookes and Mr. Herbert Bonsel; but it is perhaps not too much to say that the actual beginning of disaster was the dinner given by the Marquis of Surrey to a number of wealthy men belonging to the city of London, at which Mr. Bonsel was the guest of the evening.

## THE DINNER AT THE HOTEL CECIL



EARLY in April, 1899, a young man named Herbert Bonsel sailed for England from New York. He is said to have been a native of Coldwater, Michigan, and to have spent some sort of apprenticeship in the workshops of Edison, at Orange, New Jersey. It seems he did not prosper there to his satisfaction, and, after trying to interest people in New York in the furthering of his experiments,



he left the metropolis in disgust and returned to Coldwater, where he worked for some time in a carriage-building establishment. Bonsel's expertness with all kinds of machinery drew forth the commendation of his chief, and resulted in a friendship springing up between the elder and the younger man which ultimately led to the latter's divulging at least part of his secret to the former. The obstacle in the way of success was chiefly scarcity of money, for the experiments were costly in their nature. Bonsel's chief, whose name is not known, seems to have got together a small syndicate, which advanced a certain amount of capital, in order to allow the young man to try his fortune once more in New York, and, failing there, to come on to London. Again his efforts to enlist capital in New York were fruitless, the impending war with France at that period absorbing public attention to the exclusion of everything else. Therefore, in April, he sailed for England.

Bonsel's evil star being in the ascendant, he made the acquaintance of the wealthy Marquis of Surrey, who became much interested in the young man and his experiments. The Marquis bought out the Coldwater syndicate, returning the members tenfold what they had invested, and took Bonsel to his estate in the country, where, with ample means now at his disposal, the youthful scientist pushed his investigations to success with marvellous rapidity. Nothing is known of him until December of that year, when the Marquis of Surrey gave a dinner in his honour at the Hotel Cecil, to which were invited twenty of the richest men in England. This festival became known as "The Millionaires' Dinner"; and although



"Granaries in the air."

there was some curiosity excited regarding its purport, and several paragraphs appeared in the papers alluding to it, no surmise concerning it came anywhere near the truth. The Marquis of Surrey presided, with Bonsel at his right and the Lord Mayor of London at his left. Even the magnates who sat at that table, accustomed as they were to the noted dinners in the City, agreed unanimously that they had never partaken of a better meal, when, to their amazement, the chairman asked them, at the close of the feast, how they had relished it.

### A STRIKING AFTER-DINNER SPEECH



THE Marquis of Surrey, before introducing the guest of the evening, said that, as they were all doubtless aware, this was not a social but a commercial dinner. It was the intention, before the company separated, to



invite subscriptions to a corporation which would have a larger capitalisation than any limited liability concern that had ever before been floated. The young American at his right would explain the discoveries he had made and the inventions he had patented, which this newly formed corporation would exploit. Thus introduced, Herbert Bonsel rose to his feet and said—

"Gentlemen,—I was pleased to hear you admit that you liked the dinner which was spread before us to-night. I confess that I never tasted a better meal, but most of my life I have been poor, and therefore I am not so capable of passing an opinion on a banquet as any other here, having always been accustomed to plain fare. I have, therefore, to announce to you that all the viands you have tasted and all the liquors you have consumed were prepared by me in my laboratory. You have been dining simply on various forms of nitrogen, or on articles of which nitrogen is a constituent. The free nitrogen of the air has been changed to fixed nitrogen by means of electricity, and the other components of the food placed on the board have been extracted from various soils by the same means. The champagne and the burgundy are the product of the laboratory, and not of the wine-press, the soil used in their composition having been exported from the vine-bearing regions of France only just before the war which ended so disastrously for that country. More than a year ago Sir William Crookes announced what the nitrogen free in the air might do for the people of this world. At the time I read his remarks I was engaged in the experiments that have now been completed. I trembled, fearing I was about to be fore-stalled; but up to this moment, so far as I know, there has been made no effort to put his theories into practical use. Sir William seemed to think it would be sufficient to use the nitrates extracted from the atmosphere for the purpose of fertilising the ground. But this always appeared to me a most round-about method. Why should we wait on slow-footed Nature? If science is capable of wringing one constituent of our food from the air, why should it shrink from extracting the others from earth or water? In other words, why leave a job half finished? I knew of no reason; and, luckily, I succeeded in convincing our noble host that all food products may be speedily compounded in the laboratory, without waiting the progress of the tardy seasons. It is proposed, therefore, that a company be formed with a

capital so large that it can control practically all the water-power available in the world. We will extract from earth, air, and water whatever we need, compound the products in our factories, and thus feed the whole world. The moment our plant is at work, the occupations of agriculturist, horticulturist, and stock-breeder are gone. There is little need to dwell on the profit that must accrue to such a company as the one now projected. All commercial enterprises that have hitherto existed, or even any combination of them, cannot be compared for wealth-producing to the scheme we have now in hand. There is no man so poor but he must be our customer if he is to live, and none so rich that he can do without us."

## THE GREAT FOOD CORPORATION *oooooooo* (Limited)



AFTER numerous questions and answers the dinner party broke up, pledged to secrecy, and next day a special train took the twenty down to the Marquis of Surrey's country place, where they saw in operation the apparatus that transformed simple elements into palatable food. At the mansion of the Marquis was formed The Great Food Corporation (Limited), which was to have such an amazing effect upon the peoples of this earth. Although the company proved one of the most lucrative investments ever undertaken in England, still it did not succeed in maintaining the monopoly it had at first attempted. In many countries the patents did not hold, some governments refusing to sanction a monopoly on which life itself depended, others deciding that, although there were certain ingenious novelties in Bonsel's processes, still the general principles had been well known for years, and so the final patents were refused. Nevertheless, these decisions did not interfere as much as might have been expected with the prosperity of The Great Food Producing Corporation (Limited). It had been first in the field, and its tremendous capitalisation enabled it to crush opposition somewhat ruthlessly, aided by the advantage of having secured most of the available water-power of the world. For a time there was reckless speculation in food-manufacturing companies, and much money was lost in consequence. Agriculture was indeed killed, as Bonsel had predicted, but the farmers of Western America, in spite of the decline of soil-tilling, continued to furnish





A TRAIN  
ON  
FIRE.

much of the world's food. They erected windmills with which electricity was generated, and, drawing on the soil and the air, they manufactured nourishment almost as cheaply as the great water-power corporation itself. This went on in every part of the world where the Bousel patents were held invalid. In a year or two everyone became accustomed to the chemically compounded food, and even though a few old fogies kept proclaiming that they would never forsake the ancient wheaten loaf for its modern equivalent, yet nobody paid any attention to these conservatives; and presently even they could not get the wheaten loaf of bygone days, as grain was no longer grown except as a curiosity in some botanist's garden.

## REMARKABLE SCENE IN THE GUILDHALL



HE first three years of the twentieth century were notable for the great increase of business confidence all over the world. A reign of universal

prosperity seemed to have set in. Political questions appeared easier of solution. The anxieties that hitherto had oppressed the public mind, such as the ever-present poverty problem, provision for the old age of the labourers, and so forth, lifted like a rising cloud and disappeared. There were still the usual number of poor people; but, somehow, lack of wealth had lost its terror. It was true that the death-rate increased enormously; but nobody seemed to mind that. The episode at the Guildhall dinner in 1903 should have been sufficient to awaken the people, had an awakening been possible in the circumstances; but that amazing lesson, like others equally ominous, passed unheeded. When the Prime Minister who had succeeded Lord Salisbury was called upon to speak, he said—

"My Lord Mayor, Your Royal Highnesses, Your Excellencies, Your Graces, My Lords, and Gentlemen: It has been the custom of Prime Ministers from time immemorial to give at this annual banquet some indication of the trend of mind of the Government. I propose, with your kind permission, to deviate in slight measure from that ancient custom (cheers). I think that hitherto we have all taken the functions of Government rather more seriously than their merits demand, and a festive occasion like this should not be marred by the introduction of debatable subjects (renewed cheering). If, therefore, the band will be good enough to strike up that excellent tune, 'There will be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night,' I shall have the pleasure of exhibiting to you a quick-step I have invented to the rhythm of that lively composition (enthusiastic acclaim)."

The Prime Minister, with the aid of some of the waiters, cleared away the dishes in front of him, stepped from the floor to his chair, and from the chair to the table, where, accompanied by the energetic playing of the band, he indulged in a break-down that would have done credit to any music-hall stage. All the applauding diners rose to their feet in the wildest excitement. His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Alluria placed his hands on the shoulders of the Lord Mayor, the German Ambassador placed his hands on the shoulders of the Crown Prince, and so on down the table, until the distinguished





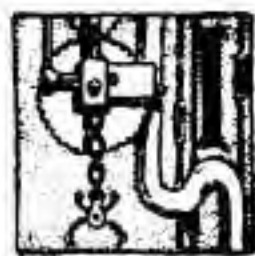
"The landing-stage was packed with lifeless human beings, whole masses still standing up, so tightly were they wedged."



guests formed a connected ring around the board on which the Prime Minister was dancing. Then all, imitating the quick-step, and keeping time with the music, began circling round the table, one after the other, shouting and hurrahing at the top of their voices. There were loud calls for the American Ambassador, a celebrated man, universally popular; and the Prime Minister, reaching out a hand, helped him up on the table. Amidst vociferous cheering, he said that he took the selection of the tune as a special compliment to his countrymen, the American troops having recently entered Paris to its melodious strains. His Excellency hoped that this hilarious evening would cement still further the union of the English-speaking races, which fact it really did, though not in the manner the honourable gentleman anticipated at the time of speaking. The company, headed by the band and the Prime Minister, then made their way to the street, marched up Cheapside, past St. Paul's, and along Fleet Street and the Strand, until they came to Westminster. Everyone along the route joined the processional dance, and upward of 50,000 persons were assembled in the square next to the Abbey and in the adjoining streets. The Prime Minister, waving his hand towards the Houses of Parliament, cried, "Three cheers for the good old House of Commons!" These being given with a tiger appended, a working-man roared, "Three cheers for 'is Lordship and the old duffers what sits with him in the 'Ouse of Lords." This was also honoured in a way that made the echoes reach the Mansion House.

The *Times* next morning, in a jocular leading article, congratulated the people of England on the fact that at last politics were viewed in the correct light. There had been, as the Prime Minister truly said, too much solidity in the discussion of public affairs; but, linked with song and dance, it was now possible for the ordinary man in the street to take some interest in them, etc., etc. Foreign comment, as cabled from various countries, was entirely sympathetic to the view taken of the occurrence by all the English newspapers, which was that we had entered a new era of jollity and good will.

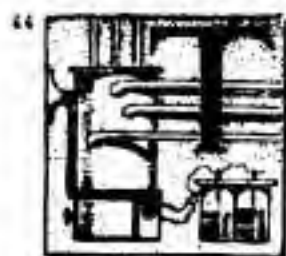
## A WARNING FROM OXFORD



HAVE now to speak of my great-grandfather, John Rule, who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was a science student at Balliol Col-

lege, Oxford, aged twenty-four. It is from the notes written by him and the newspaper clippings which he preserved that I am enabled to compile this imperfect account of the disaster of 1904 and the events leading to it. I append, without alteration or comment, his letter to the *Times*, which appeared the day after that paper's flippant references to the conduct of the Prime Minister and his colleagues—

### "THE GUILDHALL INCIDENT.



TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'TIMES':  
 "Sir,—The levity of the Prime Minister's recent conduct; the levity of your own leading article thereon; the levity of foreign reference to the deplorable episode, indicate but too clearly the crisis which mankind is called upon to face, and to face, alas! under conditions which make the averting of the greatest calamity well-nigh impossible. To put it plainly, every man, woman, and child on this earth, with the exception of eight persons in the United States and eight in England, are drunk—not with wine, but with oxygen. The numerous factories all over the world which are working night and day, making fixed nitrates from the air, are rapidly depleting the atmosphere of its nitrogen. When this disastrous manufacture was begun, 100 parts of air, roughly speaking, contained 76.9 parts of nitrogen and 23.1 parts of oxygen. At the beginning of this year, the atmosphere round Oxford was composed of nitrogen 53.218, oxygen 46.782. And here we have the explanation of the largely increased death-rate. Man is simply burning up. To-day the normal proportions of the two gases in the air are nearly reversed, standing—nitrogen, 27.319, oxygen 72.681, a state of things simply appalling: due in a great measure to the insane folly of Russia, Germany, and France competing with each other in raising mountain ranges of food products as a reserve in case of war, just as the same fear of a conflict brought their armies to such enormous proportions a few years ago. The nitrogen factories must be destroyed instantly, if the people of this earth are to remain alive. If this is done, the atmosphere will gradually become nitrogenised once more. I invite the editor of the *Times* to come to Oxford and live for a few days with us in our iron building, erected on Port Meadow, where a machine supplies us with nitrogen and keeps the atmosphere within the hut similar to that which once surrounded the



earth. If he will direct the policy of the *Times* from this spot, he may bring an insane people to their senses. Oxford yesterday bestowed a degree of D.C.L. on a man who walked the whole length of the High on his hands; so it will be seen that it is time something was done. I am, sir, yours, etc.,

"JOHN RULE.

"Balliol College, Oxford."

The *Times* in an editorial note said that the world had always been well provided with alarmists, and that their correspondent, Mr. Rule, was a good example of the class. That newspaper, it added, had been for some time edited in Printing House Square, and it would be continued to be conducted in that quarter of London, despite the attractions of the sheet-iron house near Oxford.

## THE TWO NITROGEN COLONIES



THE coterie in the iron house consisted of the Rev. Mr. Hepburn, who was a clergyman and tutor; two divinity students, two science students, and three other undergraduates, all of whom had withdrawn from their colleges, awaiting with anxiety the catastrophe they were powerless to avert. Some years before, when the proposal to admit women to the Oxford colleges was defeated, the Rev. Mr. Hepburn and John Rule visited the United States to study the working of co-education in that country. There Mr. Rule became acquainted with Miss Sadie Armour, of Vassar College, on the Hudson, and the acquaintance speedily ripened into friendship, with a promise of the closer relationship that was yet to come. John and Sadie kept up a regular correspondence after his return to Oxford, and naturally he wrote to her regarding his fears for the future of mankind, should the diminution of the nitrogen in the air continue. He told her of the precautions he and his seven comrades had taken, and implored her to inaugurate a similar colony near Vassar. For a long time the English Nitrogenists, as they were called, hoped to be able to awaken the world to the danger that threatened; and by the time they recognised that their efforts were futile, it was too late to attempt the journey to America which had long been in John Rule's mind. Parties of students were in the habit of coming to the iron house and jeering at the inmates. Apprehending violence one day, the Rev. Mr. Hepburn went outside to

expostulate with them. He began seriously, then paused, a comical smile lighting up his usually sedate face, and finally broke out into roars of laughter, inviting those he had left to come out and enjoy themselves. A moment later he began to turn somersaults round the iron house, all the students outside hilariously following his example, and screaming that he was a jolly good fellow. John Rule and one of the most stalwart of the divinity students rushed outside, captured the clergyman, and dragged him into the house by main force, the whirling students being too much occupied with their evolutions to notice the abduction. One of the students proposed that the party should return to Carfax by hand-springs, and thus they all set off, progressing like jumping-jacks across the meadow, the last human beings other than themselves that those within the iron house were to see for many a day. Rule and his companions had followed the example set by Continental countries, and had, while there was yet time, accumulated a small mountain of food products inside and outside of their dwelling. The last letter Rule received from America informed him that the girls of Vassar had done likewise.

## THE GREAT CATASTROPHE



THE first intimation that the Nitrogenists had of impending doom was from the passage of a Great Western train running northward from Oxford. As they watched it, the engine suddenly burst into a brilliant flame, which was followed shortly by an explosion, and a moment later the wrecked train lay along the line blazing fiercely. As evening drew on they saw that Oxford was on fire, even the stonework of the college seeming to burn as if it had been blocks of wax. Communication with the outside world ceased, and an ominous silence held the earth. They did not know then that London, New York, Paris, and many other cities had been consumed by fire; but they surmised as much. Curiously enough, the carbon dioxide evolved by these numerous and widespread conflagrations made the outside air more breathable, notwithstanding the poisonous nature of this mitigant of oxygenic energy. For days they watched for any sign of human life outside their own dwelling, but no one approached. As a matter of fact, all the inhabitants of the world were dead except themselves and the little colony in America, although it was



long after that those left alive became aware of the full extent of the calamity that had befallen their fellows. Day by day they tested the outside air, and were overjoyed to note that it was gradually resuming its former quality. This process, however, was so slow that the young men became impatient, and endeavoured to make their house movable, so that they might journey with it, like a snail, to Liverpool, for the one desire of each was to reach America and learn the fate of the Vassar girls. The moving of the house proved impracticable, and thus they were compelled to remain where they were until it became safe to venture into the outside air, which they did some time before it reached its normal condition.

It seems to have been fortunate that they did so, for the difficulties they had to face might have proved insurmountable had they not been exhilarated by the excess of oxygen in the atmosphere. The diary which John Rule wrote showed that within the iron house his state of depression was extreme when he remembered that all communication between the countries was cut off, and that the girl to whom he was betrothed was separated from him by 3,000 miles of ocean, whitened by no sail. After the eight set out, the whole tone of his notes changed, an optimism scarcely justified by the circumstances taking the place of his former dismay. It is not my purpose here to dwell on the appalling nature of the foot journey to Liverpool over a corpse-strewn land. They found, as they feared, that Liverpool also had been destroyed by fire, only a fringe of the river front escaping the general conflagration. So enthusiastic were the young men, according to my great-grandfather's notes, that on the journey to the seaport they had resolved to walk to America by way of Behring Straits, crossing the English Channel in a row-boat, should they find that the shipping at Liverpool was destroyed. This seems to indicate a state of oxygen intoxication hardly less intense than that which had caused the Prime Minister to dance on the table.

## A VOYAGE TO RUINED NEW YORK



HEY found the immense steamship *Teutonic* moored at the landing-stage, not apparently having had time to go to her dock when the universal catastrophe culminated. It is probable that the city was on fire when the steamer came in, and perhaps

an attempt was made to board her, the ignorant people thinking to escape the fate that they felt overtaking them by putting out to sea. The landing-stage was packed with lifeless human beings, whole masses still standing up, so tightly were they wedged. Some stood transfixed, with upright arms above their heads, and death seemed to have come to many in a form like suffocation. The eight at first resolved to take the *Teutonic* across the Atlantic, but her coal bunkers proved nearly empty, and they had no way of filling them. Not one of them knew anything of navigation beyond theoretical knowledge, and Rule alone was acquainted with the rudiments of steam-engineering. They selected a small steam yacht, and loaded her with the coal that was left in the *Teutonic's* bunkers. Thus they started for the West, the Rev. Mr. Hepburn acting as captain and John Rule as engineer. It was fourteen days before they sighted the coast of Maine, having kept much too far north. They went ashore at the ruins of Portland; but embarked again, resolved to trust rather to their yacht than undertake a long land journey through an unknown and desolated country. They skirted the silent shores of America until they came to New York, and steamed down the bay. My great-grandfather describes the scene as sombre in the extreme. The Statue of Liberty seemed to be all of the handiwork of man that remained intact. Brooklyn Bridge was not entirely consumed, and the collapsed remains hung from two pillars of fused stone, the ragged ends of the structure which once formed the roadway dragging in the water. The city itself presented a remarkable appearance. It was one conglomerate mass of grey-toned, semi-opaque glass, giving some indication of the intense heat that had been evolved in its destruction. The outlines of its principal thoroughfares were still faintly indicated, although the melting buildings had flowed into the streets like lava, partly obliterating them. Here and there a dome of glass showed where an abnormally high structure once stood, and thus the contour of the city bore a weird resemblance to its former self—about such as the grim outlines of a corpse over which a sheet has been thrown bear to a living man. All along the shore lay the gaunt skeletons of half-fused steamships. The young men passed this dismal calcined graveyard in deep silence, keeping straight up the broad Hudson. No sign of life greeted them until they neared Poughkeepsie, when they saw,





"Brooklyn Bridge was not entirely consumed, and the collapsed remains hung from two pillars of fused stone."



flying above a house situated on the top of a hill, that brilliant fluttering flag, the Stars and Stripes. Somehow its very motion in the wind gave promise that the vital spark had not been altogether extinguished in America. The great sadness which had oppressed the voyagers was lifted, and they burst forth into cheer after cheer. One of the young men rushed into the chart-room, and brought out the Union Jack, which was quickly hauled up to the mast-head, and the reverend captain pulled the cord that, for the first time during the voyage, let loose the roar of the steam whistle, rousing the echoes of the hills on either side of the noble stream. Instantly, on the verandah of the flag-covered house, was seen the glimmer of a white summer dress, then of another and another and another, until eight were counted.

### AND FINALLY



HE events that followed belong rather to the region of romance than to a staid, sober narrative of fact like the present; indeed, the theme

has been a favourite one with poets and novelists, whose pens would have been more able than mine to do justice to this international idyll. America and England were indeed joined, as the American Ambassador had predicted at the Guildhall, though at the time his words were spoken he had little idea of the nature and complete accord of that union. While it cannot be denied that the unprecedented disaster which obliterated human life in 1904 seemed to be a calamity, yet it is possible to trace the design of a beneficent Providence in this wholesale destruction. The race which now inhabits the earth is one that includes no savages and no war lords. Armies are unknown and unthought of. There is no battleship on the face of the waters. It is doubtful if universal peace could have been brought to the world short of the annihilation of the jealous, cantankerous, quarrelsome peoples who inhabited it previous to 1904. Humanity was destroyed once by flood, and again by fire; but whether the race, as it enlarges, will deteriorate after its second extinguishment, as it appears to have done after its first, must remain for the future to determine.







# MIRACLE JOYEUX.

BY  
FRANK NORRIS.

MERVIUS had come to old Jerome's stone-built farmhouse, across the huge meadow where some half-dozen of the neighbouring villagers pastured their stock in common. Old Jerome had received a certain letter, which was a copy of another letter, which in turn was a copy of another letter, and so on and so on, nobody could tell how far. Mervius would copy this letter and take it back to his village, where it would be copied again and again and yet again, and copies would be made of these copies, till the whole countryside would know the contents of that letter pretty well by heart. It was in this



way, indeed, that these people made their literature. They would hand down the precious documents to their children, and that letter's contents would become folklore, become so well known that it would be repeated orally. It would be a legend, a mythos; perhaps by and by, after a long time, it might gain credence and become even history.

But in that particular part of the country this famous letter was doubly important, because it had been written by a man whom some of the peasants and labourers and small farmers knew. "I knew him," said old Jerome, when Mervius had come in and the two had sat down on either side of the oak table in the brick-paved kitchen. Mervius—he was past seventy himself—slipped his huge wooden sabots and let his feet rest on the warm bricks near the fireplace, for the meadow grass had been cold.

"Yes, I knew him," said Jerome. "He took the name of Peter afterwards. He was a fisherman, and used to seine fish over in the big lake where the vineyards are. He used to come here twice a week and sell me fish. He was a good fisherman. Then the carpenter's son set the whole country by the ears, and he went away with him. I missed his fish. Mondays and Wednesdays he came, and his fish were always fresh. They don't get such fish nowadays."

"I'll take the letter you have," said Mervius—"the copy, that is—and my wife will transcribe it; I—I am too old, and my eyes are bad. This carpenter's son, now—as you say, he set the people by the ears. It is a strange story."

Old Jerome put his chin in the air. "He was the son of a carpenter, nothing else. We all knew his people; you did, and I. His father built the bin where I store my corn, and some stalls in my brother's barn in the next village. The son was a dreamer; anyone could have told he would have perished in the end. The people were tired of him. That was all."

Mervius did not answer directly. "I have read this letter," he said, "this fisherman's letter. The man who looks after my sheep loaned me a copy. Peter was not always with the man, the carpenter's son. One thing he has left out—one thing that I saw."

"That *you* saw!" exclaimed old Jerome.

Mervius nodded.

"I saw this man once."

"The carpenter's son?"

"Yes, once, and I saw him smile. You notice this letter never makes record of him smiling."

"I know."

"I saw him smile."

"As how?"

Mervius wrapped his lean, old arms under the folds of his blouse, and, resting his elbows on his knees, looked into the fire. Jerome's crow paced gravely in at the door and perched on his master's knee. Jerome fed him with bits of cheese dipped in wine.

"It was a long time ago," said Mervius; "I was a lad. I remember I and my cousin Joanna—she was a little girl of seven then—used to run out to the cow-stables early of the cold mornings, and stand in the fodder on the floor of the stalls to warm our feet. I had heard my father tell of this man, this carpenter's son. Did you ever hear," he added, turning to old Jerome, "did you ever hear—when you were a boy—hear the older people speak of the 'White Night'? At midnight it grew suddenly light, as though the sun had risen out of season. In fact, there *was* a sun, or star—something. The chickens all came down from their roosts, the oxen lowed the cocks crew, as though at daybreak. It was light for hours. Then towards four o'clock the light faded again. It happened in midwinter. Yes, they called it the 'White Night.' It was strange. You know the followers of this man claim that he was born on that night. My father knew some shepherds who told a strange story . . . however.

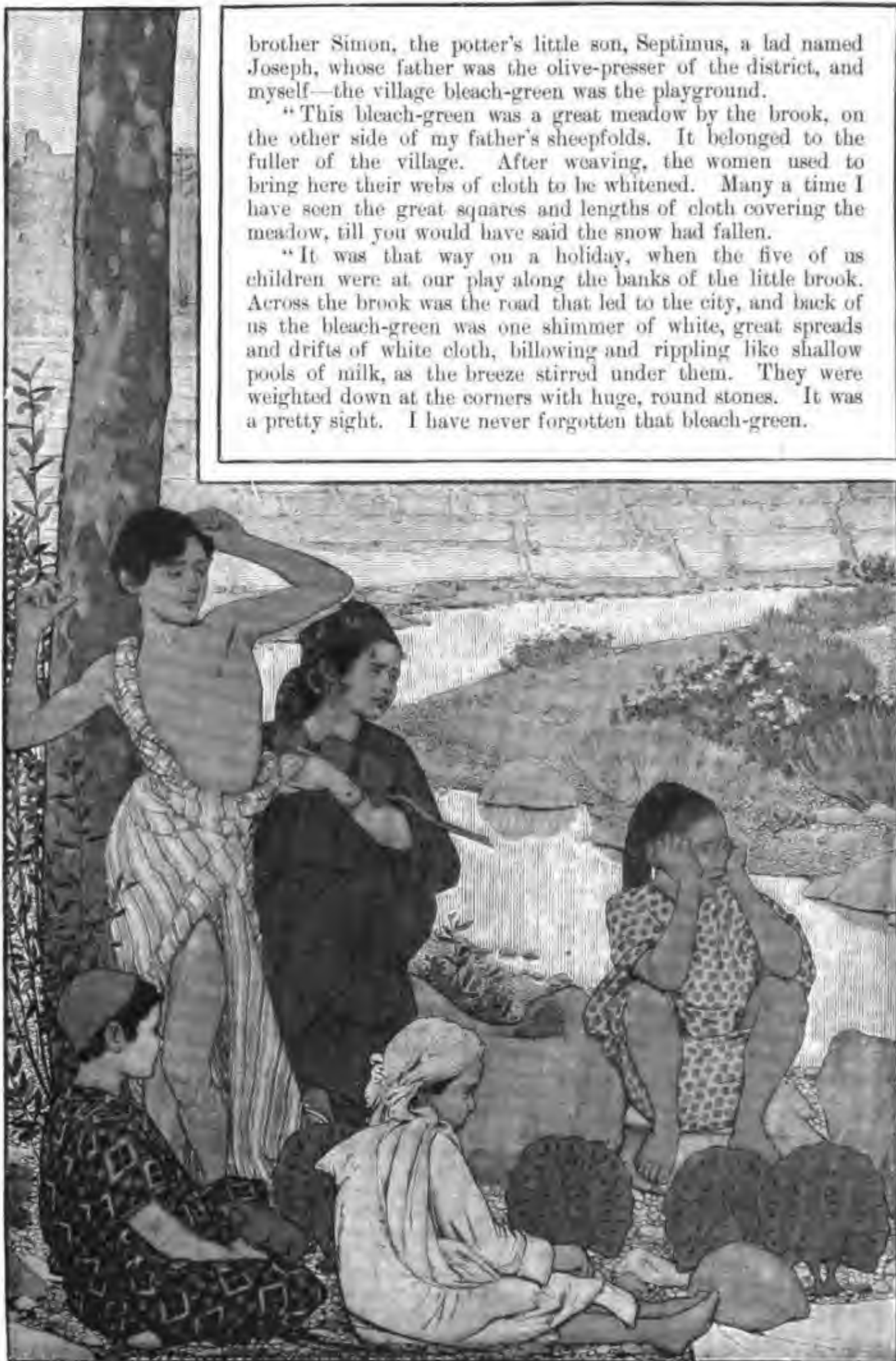
"For the children of our village—that is to say, my little cousin Joanna, my



brother Simon, the potter's little son, Septimus, a lad named Joseph, whose father was the olive-presser of the district, and myself—the village bleach-green was the playground.

"This bleach-green was a great meadow by the brook, on the other side of my father's sheepfolds. It belonged to the fuller of the village. After weaving, the women used to bring here their webs of cloth to be whitened. Many a time I have seen the great squares and lengths of cloth covering the meadow, till you would have said the snow had fallen.

"It was that way on a holiday, when the five of us children were at our play along the banks of the little brook. Across the brook was the road that led to the city, and back of us the bleach-green was one shimmer of white, great spreads and drifts of white cloth, billowing and rippling like shallow pools of milk, as the breeze stirred under them. They were weighted down at the corners with huge, round stones. It was a pretty sight. I have never forgotten that bleach-green.





"I remember that day we had found a bank of clay, and the potter's son, Septimus, showed us how to model the stuff into pots and drinking-vessels, and afterwards even into the form of animals: dogs, fishes, and the lame cow that belonged to the widow at the end of the village. Simon made a wonderful beast, that he assured us was a lion, with twigs for legs, while I and Septimus patted and pinched our lump of clay to look like the great he-pig that had eaten a litter of puppies the week past—a horror that was yet the talk of all the village.

"Joanna—she was younger than all the rest of us—was fashioning little birds, clumsy, dauby little lumps of wet clay without much form. She was very proud of them, and set them in a row upon a stick, and called for us to look at them. As boys will, we made fun of her and her little, clumsy clay birds, because she was a girl, and Simon, my brother, said—

"‘Hoh! those aren't like birds at all. More like bullfrogs, I guess. I'll show you.’

"He and the rest of us took to making all manner of birds—pigeons, hawks, chickens, and the like. Septimus, the potter's son, executed a veritable masterpiece, a sort of peacock with tail spread, which was very like, and which he swore he would take to his father's kiln to have baked. We all exclaimed over this marvel, and gathered about Septimus, praising him and his handiwork, and poor little Joanna and her foolish, dauby lumps were forgotten. Then, of course, we all made peacocks, and set them in a row, and compared them with each other's. Joanna sat apart looking at us through her tears, and trying to pretend that she did not care for clay peacocks, that the ridicule of a handful of empty-headed boys did not hurt her, and that her stupid little birds were quite as brave as ours. Then she said, by and by, timid-like and half to herself, ‘I think my birds are pretty, too.’

"‘Hoh!’ says Septimus, ‘look at Joanna's bullfrogs! Hoh! You are only a girl. What do you know? You don't know *anything*. I think you had better go home. We don't like to play with girls.’

"She was too brave to let us see her cry, but she got up, and was just about going home across the bleach-green—in the green aisles between the webs of cloth—when Simon said to me and to the others—

"‘Look, quick, Mervius, here comes that man that father spoke about, the carpenter's son who has made such a stir.’ And he pointed across the brook, down the road that runs from the city over towards the lake, the same lake where you say this Peter used to fish. Joanna stopped and looked where he pointed; so did we all. I saw the man, the carpenter's son, whom Simon meant, and knew at once that it was he.”

Old Jerome interrupted: “You had never seen him before. How did you know it was he?”

Mervius shook his head. “It was he. How could *I* tell? I don't know. I knew it was he.”

“What did he look like?” asked Jerome, interested.

Mervius paused. There was a silence. Jerome's crow looked at the bright coals of the fire, his head on one side.

“Not at all extraordinary,” said Mervius at length. “His face was that of a peasant, sun-browned, touched, perhaps, with a certain calmness. That was all. A face that was neither sad nor glad, calm merely, and not unusually or especially pleasing. He was dressed as you and I are now—as a peasant—and his hands were those of a worker. Only his head was bare.”

“Did he wear his beard?”

“No, that was afterward. He was younger when I saw him, about twenty-one maybe, and his face was smooth. There was nothing extraordinary about the man.”

“Yet you knew it was he.”





“‘He came down and stood on the other bank.’”



"Yes," admitted Mervius, nodding his head. "Yes, I knew it was he. He came up slowly along the road near the brook where we children were sitting. He walked as any traveller along those roads might, not thoughtful nor abstracted, but minding his steps and looking here and there about the country. The prettier things, I noted, seemed to attract him, and I particularly remember his stopping to look at a cherry tree in full bloom and smelling at its blossoms. Once, too, he stopped and thrust out of the way a twig that had fallen across a little ant-heap. When he had come opposite us, he noticed us all standing there and looking at him quietly from across the brook, and he came down and stood on the other bank and asked us for a drink. There was a cup in an old bucket not far away that was kept there for those who worked on the bleach-green. I ran to fetch it, and when I had come back, he, the carpenter's son, had crossed the brook, and was sitting on the bank, and all the children were about him. He had little Joanna on his knee, and she had forgotten to cry. He drank out of the cup I gave him, and fell to asking us about what we had been doing. Then we all cried out together, and showed him our famous array of clay peacocks."

"And you were that familiar with him?" said old Jerome.

"He seemed like another child to us," answered Mervius. "We were all about him—on his shoulders, on his knees, in his arms, and Joanna in his lap—she had forgotten to cry.

"'See, see my birds,' she said. I tell you she had her arms around his neck. 'See, they said they were not pretty. They are pretty, aren't they, quite as pretty as theirs?'

"'Prettier, prettier,' he said. 'Look now.' He set our little clay birds before him in a row. First mine, then Simon's, then those of Joseph and of Septimus, then one of little Joanna's shapeless little lumps. He looked at them, and at last touched the one Joanna had made with his finger-tip, then—— Did you ever see when corn is popping how the grain swells, swells, swells, then bursts forth into whiteness? So it was then. No sooner had that little bird of Joanna's, that clod of dust, that poor bit of common clay, felt the touch of his finger, than it awakened into life and became a live bird—and white, white as the sunshine, a beautiful little white bird that flew upward on the instant, with a tiny, glad note of song. We children shouted aloud, and Joanna danced and clapped her hands. And then it was the carpenter's son smiled. He looked at her as she looked up at that soaring white bird, and smiled, smiled just once, and then fell calm again.

"He rose to go, but we hung about him and clamoured for him to stay.

"'No,' he said, as he kissed us all, 'I must go, go up to the city.' He crossed the brook and looked back at us.

"'Can't we go with you?' we cried to him. He shook his head.

"'Where I am going you cannot go. But,' he added, 'I am going to make a place for just such as you.'

"'And you'll come again?' we cried.

"'Yes, yes, I shall come again.'

"Then he went away, though often looking back and waving his hand at us. What we said after he had gone I don't know. How we felt I cannot express. Long time and in silence we stood there watching, until his figure vanished around a bend in the road. Then we turned and went home across the bleach-green, through the green aisles between the webs of white cloth. We never told what had happened. That was just for ourselves alone. The same evening we heard of a great wonder that had been worked at a marriage in a town near by, water turned to wine, and a little later another, a man blind from his birth suddenly made to see.



What did we care? He had not smiled upon those others, those people at the marriage, that crowd at the market-place. What did we care?"

Mervius stopped, and slipped his feet back into his sabots, and rose. He took the letter from Jerome and put it in the pocket of his blouse.

"And you saw that?"

Mervius nodded, but old Jerome shook his head in the manner of one who is not willing to be convinced.

"He was a dreamer. Why, his people were labouring folk in one of the villages beyond the lake. His father was a carpenter, and built my corn-bin. The son was a fanatic."

"But this thing I saw," said Mervius at the door. "I saw it who am speaking to you."

Jerome put his chin in the air.

"... A dreamer. . . . But I was sorry when Peter went away. . . . Mondays and Wednesdays he came . . . and his fish were always fresh."





# THE GHOST OF OLD JOHN HILL.

By E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM.\*



I commence my story, or rather my recital, with any particularities as to my personality and present condition, the chances are that I shall alienate in

no small degree, perhaps altogether, the attention and interest which my narrative might otherwise gain. And yet, after very careful deliberation, I have decided to confess my secret in these few opening lines. I am a madman. Even while I write I am watched by a keen-eyed attendant (mine is a private asylum, and we don't call them warders). To all intents and purposes I am a prisoner. Of the world outside this—shall we say retreat?—I know nothing, nor shall I ever enter it again. Empires may rise and fall, all Europe might blaze from Madrid to Moscow with fierce war and bloodshed, kingdoms might become republics, and republics might seek again the yoke of monarchy—to me it would all be one. Outside these walls I shall never step. I have wit enough to conceal my partial recovery, for I know very well that this refuge is all that stands between me and the murderer's dock.

The winter of 18— I was compelled through ill-health to spend abroad. Perhaps it would be as well to remark here that my malady was one which affected in no degree my nervous system or my mental powers. It was, in fact, nothing but a slight weakness of the lungs, which had caused my medical attendant earnestly to recommend my spending the winter months in some warmer climate; and as I was my own master and had no ties to keep me in England, and as, moreover, the idea of escaping from the chilly humours and dreary fogs of our own

country to bask under the warm southern sun and the blue sky of the Riviera was in itself by no means displeasing to me, I took his advice.

I was staying at a small, old-fashioned town little known to tourists, and some distance out of the beaten track of the shoals of health-seeking Europeans and sight-seeing Americans, who made this region their happy hunting-ground. The hotel was no more than an inn, but the lime-tree-bordered promenade outside was seldom pressed by the foot of a stranger. There was in the place itself, its architecture, or its surroundings, little that was picturesque or attractive. But, nevertheless, it pleased me, and I had prolonged my stay for a week or two, and was still without any settled idea of going. Strange to say, it was the very dulness of the place which attracted and kept me there. It suited the mood which I happened to be in.

One evening after my solitary dinner—*table d'hôte* there was none—I had strolled, as usual, with a cigar in my mouth, down the promenade. I had had but little exercise during the day, as a fit of laziness had been upon me, and the weather had been anything but tempting, and so it happened that when I reached the end of the narrow sanded walk I felt reluctant to turn back. The night was a pleasant one for walking, and seemed all the pleasanter after the hot winds and blazing sun which had kept me lounging about under cover all day. I hesitated only for a moment, leaning over the low swing-gate at the extremity of the promenade. Then, passing through it, I stepped out on to the broad high-road and walked steadily ahead.

In about a quarter of an hour I reached four cross-roads. The road to the left, the road straight on, and the road behind me I knew well. The road to the right I had never taken, perhaps because it commenced with a remarkably stiff ascent and appeared to lead nowhere, for it was little more than a grass-grown cattle-track. But looking along it to-night a sensation of which I had certainly never before been conscious seized swiftly hold of me. I was filled with a

\* Copyright, 1901, by Ward, Lock and Co., in the United States of America.



sudden strong curiosity to explore the ill-kept, neglected by-road.

It was a curiosity which increased with every step I took, and became gradually coupled with a vague, incomprehensible premonition. What manner of prospect I expected to behold from the top of the hill which I was rapidly ascending I cannot tell, but I had a distinct and firm conviction that something out of the common was about to happen to me.

By degrees the road along which I was walking presented more and more the appearance of a mere sheep-track, until at last the hedges on either side terminated, the road itself degenerated into a footpath, and I found myself ascending a high, turf-covered hill. I was the more surprised because in my wanderings around the district I had never noticed anything of the nature of an eminence in this direction. However, I kept steadily on, till at last I reached the

summit, and, pausing to take breath, looked around me in a startled curiosity which was not without a considerable amount of awe.

Stranger and stranger it all seemed to me. Close by my side, on the highest point of the hill, was a round tower built of rough grey stone, which I was quite certain that I had never seen before. Below me and all around, the country, clearly visible in the moonlight, was of a character totally unlike any which my many walks in the vicinity had made familiar to me. Instead of the long, vineyard-covered slopes and groves of olive trees, was a thoroughly English deer-park, studded with giant oaks and dark patches of fir trees, and stretching away beyond a purely pastoral country with deep yellow cornfields and rich meadows, in many of which were dotted about the dark shapes of reclining cattle. On my left hand yawned a cleft-like chasm, overhung at the brink with thick bracken and drooping bushes—

evidently a disused slate quarry, for a broken shaft lay rotting on the ground, and all around were thick layers of broken-up slate.

I passed my hand across my eyes, half wondering whether I had not been walking in my sleep; and then, as I opened them again, I started back with a cry of horror, which rang out sharply into the clear night air, only to die away in a sort of tremor from my white, trembling lips. Face to face with me stood, or rather crouched, a man—a tall, dark man, with white, scared face and large, wildly bright eyes riveted on mine. It seemed as though he had turned round suddenly from peering down into the black depths of the chasm, and was horror-struck to see me.

Despite the cold night breeze, the perspiration streamed down from my hot, clammy forehead. I strove to speak, but I could not; like unwilling actors in a silent tableau, we stood face to face, speechless, motionless, fascinated. No sound broke the deep stillness of the summer night; no words



"When I reached the end of the narrow walk I felt reluctant to turn back."



could I force from my ashen lips after that first hoarse cry.

Suddenly there came faintly to my ears the sound of a low, moaning cry, and almost simultaneously I saw a tuft of the bracken which overhung the chasm shaken violently. A deeper chill ran through me; it seemed as though the blood in my veins was turned to ice, and I stood motionless, my feet frozen to the ground with fear. Slowly I distinguished something white moving amongst the tuft of ferns. At first it seemed shapeless, but as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness it gradually resolved itself into a pair of white hands clutching desperately at the roots of the ferns, as though the person to whom they belonged was striving frantically to draw himself up from beneath. Almost he seemed about to succeed, for, as I leaned over towards the spot with spell-bound gaze, a white, desperate face, colourless with fear, save where smeared with blood from a wound in the temple, slowly appeared above the brink of the chasm, and I could tell from the convulsive swaying of the shoulders that the struggling man was making frantic attempts to obtain a foothold.

The horrible sight seemed to loosen my joints, which had become stiff with fear, and with a cry of encouragement I sprang forward to his aid. But the crowning horror of the whole scene was to come. The man whom I had first seen turned suddenly round, and, raising a gun which lay flat upon the ground beside him, brandished it high over his head, and brought it down with a sickening thud upon the struggling fingers. A wild shriek of despair burst from the lips of his victim as his hands relaxed their hold upon the bracken, and I reached the edge of the chasm only in time to see him stiff and rigid in mid-air, his arms stretched wildly up to the starlit sky, in the very act of falling backwards, to see him and to recognise in his ghastly countenance the face of the man who had been my close companion for years, my sworn college chum, and the only man whom I had ever cared to call a friend—Philip Hardingstone, Squire of Little Hampton.

Wild impulses, mad thoughts, rushed like lightning through my surging brain. I would have leaped after him into the black chasm. I would have struck down the murderer of my friend, and, with my fingers clutching his throat, have wrought out a speedy vengeance. I would have shrieked

out my horror to the silent night. But I was powerless. Again some strange metamorphosis crept subtly and swiftly over me. Not one of these things could I do. My feet seemed suddenly sinking through the yielding ground; the scene around me closed in, growing dimmer and dimmer, until at last everything—my senses, my instincts, my very consciousness of existence—was merged in an apathetic chaos. What immediately followed is hard for me to say. There was no period of absolute blank unconsciousness, but my material surroundings seemed suddenly to change from chaotic indistinctness to a scene which I knew quite well. I found myself, without any sense of motion, or having moved, leaning against a gate, looking over a sloping vineyard only a few yards away from the cross-roads. Thunder-struck and bewildered, I gazed wildly about me for a few moments. Then turning round, I hurried along the grass-grown track. In vain; I came to no hill, and the path beneath my feet grew into a broad, white high-road, winding far away into a level stretch of rolling plains. This way and that, backward and forward, I ran like a man demented. Far away in the east the sun was slowly bursting through a mass of orange-streaked clouds, scattering a purple and golden glory all over the azure sky. Morning came, noon, and afternoon; then my wearied limbs gave way, and I sank down on the roadside and prayed that the unconsciousness that was already stealing over me, numbing my frenzied brain and throbbing senses, might come soon. It came as I lay there, blotting out the hideous scene which all through the day had been dancing before my eyes, and the memory of the ghastly, diabolical face of Philip Hardingstone's murderer. With a sigh of relief, I turned on my side and fainted.

Some peasants going home from their day's toil in the vineyards stumbled upon me and, finding my address on an envelope in my pocket, carried me down to the hotel. Towards afternoon on the next day I recovered consciousness, and with it came flooding in upon my memory the fearful scene which I had witnessed. In spite of the doctor's peremptory orders, I insisted upon sitting up in bed and writing out with trembling fingers a telegram to Philip Hardingstone, imploring him to let me know by return that he was well. Until the reply came I could do nothing, but lay tossing restlessly about, on the verge of a fever. Towards evening an orange-coloured envelope





"Brandished it high over his head, and brought it down with a sickening thud."

was brought to my bedside, and I tore it hastily open.

"From John Elwick, butler at Little Hampton Hall, to Reginald Morton, Hôtel

de Paris.—Your telegram received. Please come to England at once. Mr. Hardingstone was killed this morning falling down the slate quarry on Old John Hill."



For five weeks I lay ill of a brain fever, and even when its acute stage had passed, and I was able to move about a little, my doctor watched me anxiously, and seemed far from satisfied with my state. I myself knew that a change had come upon me. My memory seemed partially gone; I was subject to frequent fits of delirious excitement, and to corresponding periods of intense depression. When at last I flatly refused to stay where I was any longer, and left for England, Dr. F—— insisted upon my engaging a servant of his own recommendation to travel with me. And I knew why: I felt that I was going mad.

Immediately on my arrival in London I telegraphed to John Elwick to come up from Little Hampton to my hotel. The next morning he came.

From him I heard the manner in which his master was supposed to have met his death. It seemed that he had left home with his gun and a couple of dogs, and had sent down to the keeper's lodge for Wilson, the under-keeper, to meet him with some beaters and a favourite spaniel of his on Old John Hill. When they arrived there they found no signs of their master. They waited for an hour, and then sent down to the house. The reply came back that Mr. Hardingstone had left at the time appointed, and had not returned. They waited for another hour, and then one of the keepers, strolling about, noticed the torn bracken and tumbled earth at the side of the quarry. Ropes were sent for, and a search was instantly commenced. Late at night the body was found, fearfully mangled and crushed. The conclusion instantly arrived at by everyone was that he had made a false step and fallen over the dangerously exposed edge by accident.

I listened to the recital in silence. When Elwick had concluded, and stood with his head turned suspiciously away from me, I asked a question—

"Who succeeded to the estates, Elwick?"

"Mr. Esholt, sir, his nephew," answered Elwick somewhat huskily.

"Mr. Esholt! Tell me everything that you know about him," I demanded.

Elwick shook his head slowly.

"That won't be much, sir, and nothing very good. They do say that he has been a terrible scamp. He's only been to the Hall twice, and each time it was to borrow money. I remember last time he came I heard the master say to him, just before he went, that it would be of no use his coming again, for he would never give him another penny."

"Where was Mr. Esholt when this happened?" I asked.

"In Chicago, sir; leastways, so he said," Elwick answered doubtfully. "He turned up about a fortnight ago in London and said that he had come straight from there."

"Can you describe him?" I asked, and waited for the answer with an impatience which I utterly failed to conceal.

Elwick did so. He was tall and sallow, with black eyes and hair. Then I knew this was the man who had murdered my friend.

"It's almost a wonder, sir, as you haven't heard nothing of him, seeing as Miss Clara——" Elwick hesitated suddenly and looked doubtful.

"Do you mean my sister, Elwick?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; Miss Clara and her aunt, Lady Alice, sir—they're often at the Hall, and they do say, sir, begging your pardon, as how we shall soon be having a mistress at the old place."

I arose from my seat, dazed and trembling, and hurried from the room. In my other apartment was a little pile of letters which I had not as yet looked at. Hastily selecting those from my aunt and my sister, I tore them open and scanned them through.

My vague fears turned swiftly into a distinct sense of horror. From first to last they were full of praises of my old friend's nephew, who was quite a close neighbour of theirs; and my aunt's letters, which I looked at first, were full of hints as to the cause of his constant visits and attentions to my sister Clara. I threw them down and opened Clara's letters. They were more explicit still. Mr. Esholt had asked her to become his wife. Would I come down and meet him? There was another letter in the pile, the handwriting of which was strange to me. I tore it open. It was signed George Esholt, and contained a formal offer for my sister's hand.

Again there came that terrible tightening of the brain, that hideous vision before my eyes, and a monotonous buzzing in my ears. I knew that this was madness, and I fell on my knees and prayed that it might leave me, if only for a little while. My prayer was granted. I fell asleep and awoke weak and full of strange thoughts and sensations, but with my purpose still clear before me.

By the midday train I travelled down to Little Hampton, and, hiring a fly at the station, drove at once to the Hall. Mr. Esholt was in the park with some ladies, I was told. Would I await his return, or





"I caught him by the throat, and bore him struggling to the chasm."

should they send in search for him? I replied that I would go and try to find him myself. And with that purpose I crossed the terraced lawns, and, dismissing the man who would have been my guide, I strode away across the smooth, velvety turf.

Far away in the distance, amongst the grey, crumbling walls of some ivy-covered ruins, I saw light dresses flitting about, and towards these I directed my footsteps. I reached them unobserved, and, crouching down behind the remnant of a pillar, peered into the enclosure where the little group were standing talking.

I saw what I had expected to see: the man whose face had haunted me without ceasing since that terrible night, my aunt, and my sister. They were speaking with raised voices, and I listened.

"Mr. Esholt, you positively shall not refuse to take me there again! I will go, sir! If you won't take me, I shall go alone!"

I recognised Clara's imperious voice, and I knew at once that she would have her way. But he did not yield all at once. I saw his pale face grow paler, and he seemed to be keeping back a shudder only with a great effort.

"Clara," he said, "can't you wonder that I hate the place? Don't ask me to take you there, please."

There was a brief silence, and I leaned my burning forehead against the stone wall, and through the chinks I could see that my sister was standing

a little apart, with an angry frown upon her fair face. Then he approached her slowly. There was a short whispered conversation, and finally she left his side with an air of satisfied triumph.

"Auntie, we are going. Will you come?"

Aunt Alice shook her head and leaned back in her impromptu seat—the fallen, moss-covered trunk of a giant tree.

"No, I'll wait for you. My hill-climbing days are over."

Then I saw them leave her, hand-in-hand, and at a safe distance I followed, keeping just inside a long plantation of fir trees



during the first part of the ascent, and afterwards bending low down amongst the tall bracken, ready to disappear altogether should they look round. Before me lay the high, grass-covered hill, the round, grey tower, and the quarry, just as I had seen them all on that horrible night. At every step I took, every time my eyes fell upon him bending over my sister with all a lover's tenderness, the weight upon my brain seemed to grow heavier. Earth and sky seemed dancing around me in fantastic shapes, and the dark branches of the pine trees stooped down and whispered to me, Murder! murder! murder! A band of iron seemed to be tightening itself around my forehead, but my feet touched the grass and met with no more resistance than if I had been walking upon air. All continuity of thought and memory seemed to be breaking up within me, and I felt a strange, wild craving to shout, to run and leap, to burst out into peals of laughter. But still I kept my eyes on the ascending pair in front of me and stealthily followed them. They reached the top almost at the same moment as I also gained it by a more devious track and concealed myself behind a mass of rock. They moved to the side of the chasm, she full of awed curiosity, he pale and shrinking. Then up from my hiding-place I leaped, and stood before them, wild and dishevelled, with my burning eyes fixed upon his ghastly face, pointing, pointing with shaking hand into the abyss below.

"Murderer! murderer!" I shrieked, and the wild west wind caught up my cry and carried it down into the valley and bore it against the rock-strewn hills opposite, till

the very air seemed ringing with echoes of that one word. He shrank back from me in an agony of dumb-stricken fear and leaned trembling against the tower. I followed him, caught him by the throat, and bore him struggling to the chasm. He snatched at a tuft of bracken; I tore it up by the roots and flung it down into the black water below. He dug his fingers into the mould. I stamped upon them until he relaxed his hold, and then, seizing him by the waist, I pushed him back, back, back to the very edge of the chasm and hurled him backwards. In mid-air, as his struggling feet left the ground, he shrieked out for mercy. I laughed back at him, and, leaning over the side, watched his quivering body fall until it disappeared into the black waters below—watched it, laughing all the time with the fierce, delirious joy of madness, and it seemed to me that the rocks and the trees and the very clouds were laughing with me. Everything seemed to me laughing except the white, unconscious form of my sister, who lay fainting on the grass. Mad! mad! mad! Yes, I'm mad enough at times. I was a raving lunatic when they tried me for murder, and my trial was a farce, for before it was over they brought me here to this asylum. Sometimes my reason returns to me for a brief while. I am sane now, but it will not be for long. Even now it is coming; the wild visions before my eyes, the fiery weight upon my brain. They all know it here; my keeper knows the signs and he is coming. Ah! they have taken my paper away from me, and now my pen. No matter, I have finished.





# A SECRET OF THE SOUTH POLE.

By HAMILTON DRUMMOND.\*



ALL Sloppleton knew him as "Cap'n Towson," and if I had my own suspicions that quartermaster, with a third mate's certificate, was nearer the mark, I kept my opinion to myself. The fiction—if it was a fiction—was an innocent one, and none of his making, nor, indeed, any business of mine.

The only claims I ever heard him urge were those of seamanship and experience. Of the first I am no judge, a ten-foot punt being the largest craft I have ever navigated; but the frank deference shown him by the fishermen and longshore sailor-folk argued that his claim was just. That he was a deep-water seaman I am certain; not simply because of his familiarity with sundry foreign ports of which I also had some knowledge, but there was that depth in the eye, that set and grave immobility of face, which are born of dealing with Nature in the bulk. The serious gravity of the sea begets itself in those who do business continually in great waters.

As to his experience, I have only himself as witness; but even when large allowance has been made for amplification and the imagination which is the gift of the sea, I hold the evidence to be sufficient. Those of my friends to whom I have retold his tales have not scrupled to call him liar, and certainly his stories were at times largely capable of disbelief. But for my part I always found it hard to doubt him; he was so circumstantial, so fluent, so calmly level, so credulous of himself. There was no assertiveness, no subtle doubt lurking in an appeal for belief, but just a quiet assurance that disarmed incredulity. Your habitual liar has a way of calling the gods to witness that is in itself suspicious. With Towson there was none of that. The thing

was so because it was so. It was as if Galileo said the sun moved because it moved, and not all the Pope Urbans in the world could make it a lie.

Still, at times I almost had my doubts, and was inclined to think he had missed his generation and was a survival of the Arabian Nights. For instance, he had one story of a tidal wave, the precedent hollow of which burrowed so deep that it laid bare—but that is not the present story, and so may be left aside. Only, even with it, as Cap'n Towson told the tale, I declare I saw the oozy sludge of the sea's foundations creep up and up the hissing crystal surface of the watery mountain, until its foul and slimy blackness stained it to its summit. A lie? Well, maybe so—maybe so; but then, you did not hear Cap'n Towson tell the story, and I did. More truth lies in the way a thing is told than most men suppose, which is a subtle saying and needs some thinking out. We had become very good friends, we two, especially during ten days' wet weather.

Sloppleton is not a cheerful place in a grey drizzle, and a man wearies of the smell of twist tobacco and stale beer held in suspense in the atmosphere of the local taproom. These ten days, therefore, were mostly spent by the open window of my diggings, our boot heels on the wooden bench which lay by the wall, and ourselves sunk as far in the comfort of two armchairs as the hard padding of the shiny horsehair would permit.

But once it was on the afternoon of the tenth day—a straggle of sunshine tempted us out into the sloppy road, and when the downpour recommenced, Cap'n Towson's cottage was the nearest shelter, and there we retreated. It was not the first time I had been his guest, and so the collected treasures of his seafaring life were more or less familiar. There were the usual birds of gay plumage under glass shades, the uncouth seashells, the fretted sprays of coral, the dreary conventional specimens which serve to keep green the memory of the retired merchant seaman. A ship's model was placed above the doorway, its spars awry, its thread ropes snapped and tangled. Over the mantelpiece there gaped a set of shark's jaws, topped by the blade of a swordfish,

\* Copyright, 1902, by Ward, Lock and Co., in the United States of America.





"Such a craft I never saw in all my days."

and perched on the carefully dusted Bible was the figure of a nodding mandarin.

They were all so obviously the matter-of-course possessions of such a man that I had never given them a second look; but now, as Cap'n Towson absented himself to hunt up the ingredients of a friendly grog, I wandered aimlessly round the room and took stock of its stale curiosities. One thing only struck me as an oddity, and that by reason of its inconsequence rather than its strangeness, and at it I was staring when Cap'n Towson returned with his liquid hospitality carefully balanced in the depths of a soup-plate; not, be it understood, what he would have called "awash," but I take it trays were at a premium.

"Ah!" said he, setting down the plate with a clang that drove the little mandarin into a passion of affirmation, "you're a deep one, you are. There you are at the Koe—I—nore first thing. That's the gem o' the whole kit, that is. I've always said I'll give the whole shanty to the man that tells me what it is, an' now's your chance, for what I say I stick to."

"It's a bit dark, Cap'n," I began.

"Oh! have all the light on the subject you can," and he chuckled as if at a joke. "I'll pull the blind up. There, what do you make of it now?"

To be frank, I didn't make much. It was an irregular, flattish fragment, perhaps

Henry Austin



two inches square, and slightly curved inwards at top and bottom. A stout thread held it in place against a piece of millboard, and the whole was framed and glazed like a picture. In colour it was greyish blue, and its surface smooth but dull. There was neither inscription nor mark upon it that I could see.

"Well?" and he shook me by the elbow with a kind of good-humoured, triumphant impatience. "Well?"

Tilting it so that the light—dim at the best, for the rain was coming down heavier than ever—fell upon it, I bent down and then drew back, in the approved fashion of a critic who is at a loss for an opinion and yet fears to show his ignorance.

"It is—that is to say, it looks like—metal?"

Cap'n Towson smacked his thigh noisily.

"The shanty's safe for this time. Guess again, mate."

But I shook my head. What was the use of guessing. There was no doubt that Cap'n Towson's mystery went beyond the mere composition of the fragment he preserved so carefully, and I said as much.

"You're right, sir; an' by gum! them that goes down to the sea in ships see mortal queer things. Now, there isn't a museum in the whole country has the equal to that scraple of shucks there. Metal, says you? Well, maybe 'tis; then again, maybe it's glass, maybe it's pottery, an' maybe it's somethin' of all three, that we folks on our side of the world know nothin' about. I give you my word I don't know, and I never met the man as could tell me. That's a bit o' the South Pole, that is!" and again he chuckled, but checked himself. "But, by gum! it was no laughing matter. When I die, I'm a-goin' to leave it to the British Museum. I s'pose they'll pound it to bits to see what it's made of. Even then they won't be any the wiser, an' there's no more where that came from—at least, I hope not, if what I think came in it. We've trouble enough in the world without that. Well, let 'em pound. When that day comes I won't care. Mix your grog, an' I'll tell you how I came by it."

In the soup-plate were two long tumblers pushed one into the other, a small jug of water, and a bottle of rum three-parts full. Separating the tumblers, he handed me one, laid his thick, stumpy fingers round his own so that their lower line encircled the curve of the bottom, and filled the glass until the spirit rose level above the upper line of his forefinger. Then he handed me the

bottle, and added about an equal quantity of water.

"Strict measure's my motter, Mr. Ward, strict measure. Then a man never drinks too much nor too little; the first is brutal and the second beastly. Here's luck! Now, sir, you'd best sit down, and—yes, I'll fill it again. In a manner, d'ye see, there's two yarns in it, and I'm not so sure where to begin. At the beginning? Easy said an' seems reasonable, but I ain't no circus rider. To spin two yarns at once is about as bad as to straddle a couple of harebacked horses. Sooner or later they'll part company, and then where are you? No, I'll drop the barque *Julia K. Anderson*, five weeks out from 'Frisco and bound round the Horn, much as she dropped me, and that's without so much as a 'By your leave,' an' begin where she left off with three of us—Tobias Clark, Joe Brady, an' myself—adrift in the Pacific. I was a foc'sle hand those days, Mr. Ward, and I'm not ashamed of it. Why should I? It's a noble calling is the sea, and I reckon England sucks her Empire out o' the salt water. The foc'sle isn't the poop-deck, I know, an' there are some that sneer at a sailorman's ignorance; but mostly the foc'sle knows as much as the foc'sle wants to, and when I say we were about 110° West and 5° South, you'll know we were half distance between the Marquesas and the Galapagos. Thanks be to goodness! the ocean stood to her name, an' with the Line so near we had no cold to grumble at. How did we get there, an' in an open boat? Now, sir, that's the other yarn, and I'll tell it any day in the week; but what I'm talkin' of now is that sliver o' potsherd there in the frame, an' the sooner I get to it the sooner I'll be done.

"Bein' there, there was two things we might do, make east to the mainland or west to the islands, an' the drift o' the current settled it for us. No man of sense swots more in the tropics than he can help, and when God Almighty sets the sea drifting," and he raised his hand reverently as if in a salute, "why, it's only a fool that doesn't say 'Amen' an' be thankful. That means, d'ye see, we headed for the islands.

"A day an' a night we had made our westing, an' with the sudden coming o' the morning Brady woke me up.

"'Glory be!' says he, shaking me, 'the trip's over afore it's begun, an' good luck go with it! Look ye there!'

"With that I sat up, blinking an' gaping, for I had been sound as a top, an' my eyes were still glued with sleep, till he slewed me



round an' pointed astarn. 'Whoo-oop!' says he, dancing an' laughing an' crying all in one, like the mad Irishman he was; 'if that isn't the makings of land, oh! call me Bull.'

"By that I had my knee on the after thwart an' was staring east with my hands as telescope. The sun was up, an' a point or two to the north, so that the black spot was plain enough, being no more than five miles away, maybe four, the shimmer o' the sea in the sun makin' it hard to guess. Too plain, for I turns to Brady and says to him, sudden-like—

"'Bull!'

"My word! Mr. Ward, you should ha' seen his jaw drop, though at first he didn't catch on.

"'What d'ye mean? Who's ye callin' names?'

"'What I say. Bull! Bull-calf, if ye like it better, an' a darned sight too good for ye. Don't you know a derelict when you see her?'

"By this time Clark had crawled out o' the bows, an' was on his hands an' knees between us, leaning over the stern.

"'Irish is right, an' Irish is wrong,' says he, 'which is a way them Irish have, an' makes it so hard to know when you've got 'em. She's a blamed hulk, that's what she is sure enough; but I guess'—Clark was a New Yorker—I guess she's sound enough, for she rides high,



"'I'm thinking Davy Jones is aboard.'"



an' a tight hulk is better'n a crank cockleshell any day in the week.'

"But that didn't satisfy Brady. Not that he kicked. No, sir, Brady was no fool till his fourth tot o' rum, but as he laid himself to his oar—me steerin'—I saw his face was sort o' vacant-like; an' he was mutterin', 'Bull, Bull,' slowly an' softly to himself, like a man tryin' to get the grip o' somethin' that beat him. It's not often a man gives himself away as badly as Brady did.

"Well, sir, as I say, I was steerin', an' little by little as the hulk bulked agin the sky, I liked its looks less an' less. 'Twasn't that it had no masts an' was as bare o' bulwarks as a canal barge. That was right enough in a derelict, an' I'd seen it from the first, though Brady in his hot haste had missed that they were missin'. No, it wasn't that the decks were swept as clean as if they'd been whittled bare with a jack-knife, but it was the unchancy look of her.

"Such a craft I never saw in all my days. She was driftin' portside on, an' as she rose on the sky she was more like a brace o' narrow, two-storey cottages gone awash than a decent ship. High an' rounded at the bows, high an' rounded at the stern, an' low in the waist, with no kind of elbow room between the two. She had great square windows for ports, an' except for the ragged stumps o' two masts she was naked as a shell. There wasn't so much as a twisted end of a stay stickin' out from the side.

"When she was a little less'n a quarter of a mile off, I sang out, an' we lay to an' took stock.

"My! but her hull was smooth! The old man o' the 'Frisco hooker had been a bully for holystonin', but *Julia K.* never had her decks polished like the side walls an' gable ends o' them cottages; no, sir. Their smoothness was past words, an' fairly beat me; but Clark, the Yank, twigged it in a wink. I reckon he'd done some whalin' in his time.

"'Ice,' says he, 'an' whips of ice at that.'

"'Begorrah!' chips in Brady, with a grin. 'I hope she's some aboard. I could do with a bit in the grog this weather.'

"But neither Clark nor me laughed. The uncanny lumpishness of the thing bothered me.

"'Blame me if ever I saw such a craft,' says I.

"'Haven't ye?' says Brady. 'Well, faith! I have, or a half wan, anyhow. It was high an' dry on the Kerry coast, an' they do say

it was there afore Crom'ell's time, bad cess to him!'

"Ah! Cap'n Towson," interrupted I. "I have it now. She was Spanish."

"Maybe, sir, maybe. What we saw afterwards might ha' been Spanish, but Spain never made that mossel o' shucks there in the frame. Call her Spanish, Mr. Ward, though; it makes no odds.

"What I've figured out is this. She went bust, say, 40° West an' the same North, an' the south-east arm o' the Gulf Stream bore her past the Azores, west o' the Cape Verdes, and so into the Guinea Channel. Then she got south into the Equatorial current, an' drifted west until the flow splits on San Roque, when down she came south again until she caught the Antarctic drift, an' crawled away east on the 40th parallel. Somewhere near Saint Paul's a wind took her, and away she went into the ice, where Clark made out she lay two hundred years an' more. Long or short, it's there, to the best o' my belief, that bit o' china-metal went aboard of her; though that, like the reckoning I've laid out for her, is nothin' better than guesswork. It's mighty little we know of what goes on in the pack-ice 'way south, an' one thing's sure, in the ice she was. The pulpy sleekness of her timbers proved that. For a while we sat eyeing her, then says Clark—

"'A corpse, boys, that's what she is—a corpse.'

"'A corpse that doesn't want no buryin',' answers Brady. 'Leastways, not till we've done with her. Here, skipper, give us a tot o' rum all round, an' let's go aboard. I've had as much of a half-inch plank as is good for me health.'

"But Clark had a word to say. 'She's a hundred years old, maybe two, maybe three; happen she's rotten.'

"'Rotten yourself!' cried Brady, swirling the boat round with a dash of his oar; 'look how she floats. I'm for boarding her, anyhow. Sixteen hundred miles in an open boat, when I can have a sound bottom under me and a deck overhead? Not likely! Put your back in it, mate.'

"'Put your back in it,' said I, an' no more passed until we were squarely alongside the hulk. Still, for all Brady's talk, the more I saw, the less I liked. If it was as old as Clark said, then it must be the devil's own ship, surely, or it would have gone under long before. Then, again, Clark might be wrong, an' when I came to think of it that was worse. So there I hung in





"For a minute he swayed there."

the wind, betwixt an' between it is an' it isn't. But Brady had no doubts.

"'Saints be good to us!'" said he cheerfully, an' standing up on the thwart he gripped the edge of the port an' looked in—the upper port, you understand; the under one was close on the water's edge an' tight battened. Then "'Saints be good to us!'" he said again, but as if he had more need of the goodness, an' wasn't so sure it was to be had for the asking.

"The sea was as calm as a lake, but where there's such a vast o' water there's

always a rise an' fall. Not much of a swing it wasn't, but enough to tilt the port now up an' inch or two, an' now down.

"'Well?' said Clark. 'Well?'"

"But it wasn't until the hull had swung two or three times that Brady answered.

"'The skylight's covered over, but I'm thinking Davy Jones is aboard, for I see what's like a bundle o' clothes on the floor. Best shin up an' whip the tarpaulin off.'

"'If one shins up,' says I, 'we all shin up. We stick together, whether here or there.'

"'All it is,' says Brady, an' up he climbs, with the painter round the crook of his arm.

"The port gave him a foothold, an' from there he could get a grip o' the edge o' the deck; but, all the same, it was no easy job. Once on deck, he made the rope fast round the stump o' the mast, so that me an' Clark had an easy road.

"The sea takes a man to many a queer spot, Mr. Ward, but never to a queerer than that old hulk. Where we stood was more like the round top of a tower than a ship's deck, an' though I'm no more a coward than another, I'd have no stomach for a gale o' wind on such a craft. But the colour was queerer than the build.

'Twas all a greyish-white, smooth as an egg an' spongy like sodden cork, so spongy that our boots left the print o' the big nails clear up to the flat o' the sole, an' where Clark's was split at the heel there was the split showin' sharp an' clean with every tramp.

"'Ice,' says he again. 'Ice, an' freezin' an' thawin' and dryin' and soakin' an' freezin'. That's what that means.'

"The only part of the deck where we stood that wasn't as flush as the palm o' your hand was the skylight. It ran up the middle o' the poop an' was longish an' low. I reckon



it served as a seat in the days the old scow wasn't a corpse. Brady was right when he said it was covered over, but 'twasn't with tarpaulins. Maybe they didn't have tarpaulins in those days. If not, they had what was as good, four or five, or perhaps eight or ten thicknesses o' canvas and blankets, but so matted that no man could tell which was one an' which was t'other, the rain an' the spray an' the wind an' the sun had beat them so solid. Tags o' cordage hangin' from the rings at the sides showed how they had been lashed, but the ropes had wore out long before, an' what held them in their place was a criss-cross o' chain, stout enough once maybe, but rusted to the fineness of a weddin' ring. The whole was a dirty, washed-out grey, the colour somethin' of a wasp's nest, an' the most corpse-like thing in the whole corpse ship.

"'Ice,' says Clark again, with a nod of his head at the skylight; 'all that was to keep the cold out; an' by gum! I guess they wanted it, every scrap!'

"'Then they don't want it no more,' says Brady. 'Be the Holy Fly! it's hot enough here. Let's have it off, bullies!'

"The chains were little better than streaks o' rust, an' so snapped with the first tug, but I tell you, Mr. Ward, that tug gave me the shivers. It was ghastly to think they hadn't been handled for maybe more than three hundred years, an' that the beggars who strained them were lyin' down below with mighty little on but their bones; but when it came to rippin' off the rotten canvas, that was ghastlier still. I give you my word it was like strippin' the dead, an' even now there are times when I lie awake o' nights that I can hear the soft rattle o' the rip o' the stuff; an' when I hear it, the skin of my back creeps an' I go cold down the spine.

"There was a grating, under the canvas, and glass under the grating, all covered thick with a woolly, soft dust like you get in the corners o' your pockets. The glass an' grating were both set in a frame, but the wood had shrunk with the heat. It stuck a bit, but no more than was natural, an' rather as if somethin' was suckin' at the glass. The edges seemed free enough, an', except for the suckin' back, it lifted out as easy as say 'Knife.' A bar of iron, still pretty stout, ran along the middle o' the skylight from end to end, holdin' the back o' the frame in place. Laying the glazed grating down on the deck, we looked inside.

"All that," said Cap'n Towson, breaking off suddenly, "all that is nothin'—at least,

no more than any man might come across in five years' cruisin' over God's waters; but what came after was queer, mighty queer, that I'll admit.

"What with the portholes an' the open skylight, an' the sun blazing above, the cabin was as plain to be seen as the palm o' your hand. My word! but it was spick an' span. Of course, there was the raffle of odds an' ends lyin' round loose, for I take it sailormen were just sailormen three hundred years ago, an' had their easy-going ways much as they have now, but there warn't no dust to speak of. I tell you, Mr. Ward, that took my breath. All these years o' travel an' no dust to show for them! Why, you can't leave a cuddy a week but you could write your name on the chair backs. Yes, that bothered me; but what bothered me worse was to see a slim, queer-shaped bottle standin' on end on the table right under my nose, an' half full o' some brownish stuff. Now, what business had a bottle to be end up after jogging half round the world, an' rocked by Heaven only knows what gales o' wind? A slim, crank thing it was, too. We don't have the like of it nowadays, an' more's the pity it got broke. An' what business had the liquor lyin' in it all them years, an' never dryin' up? That, as Clark would say, rattled me, an' small wonder. It was a creepy thing to come on all of a sudden, an' in such a ghost of a craft, but there was more besides it. By the bottle was a tin platter, bright enough, so bright y'd say a cloth had wiped it the day before, an' on the platter was a lump o' ship's bread. It was like nothin' in the way o' hard tuck I ever saw, but ship's bread it was, an' no mistake. I tell you that staggered me. The bottle maybe was fixed somehow, an' the platter maybe was fixed; but what fixed a lump o' crusty, slippery hard tuck all these hundred years, an' the hulk driftin', driftin', through who knows what rattle an' tumble of seas? I don't know that Clark or Brady took notice. I reckon they were huntin' after the heaps o' clothes Irish had seen through the port, an' when I saw them peerin' an' stretchin' their necks I quit shiverin' an' followed their wake. Nor were the bundles far to seek. Three o' them there were, all the length but twice the girth o' a common man, so that when Clark said 'Ice' for the fourth time, I guess he was about right. You can bet it knows how to freeze south of 80°!

"They were bunched in a heap by the cuddy door, an' must have had three suits apiece on them; thin in the legs, with no breeches to speak of, puffed at the hips, an'



with great heavy cloaks. The door was fast shut, an' I could see a thick bar across it, the ends fallin' into sockets beyond the posts, as if to stand against hard pressure.

"For bears an' such vermin," says Clark, who caught my eye. "I guess them three was all that was left o' the ship's crew, an' so good people was scarce. The rest was in Kingdom Come."

"I reckon he was about right, but I didn't answer. I was tryin' to puzzle it out for myself, an' the way they lay told a tale. They were all head-on to the door; they were all flat on their faces, with their arms stretched out an' their fingers clawin' at the floor. That meant they were makin' a bolt for the open when somethin' dropped them in their tracks, dropped them sudden an' dropped them sure. Just so, but what? what? That's what I asked myself, an' maybe the answer was that one held what looked like a crumple o' paper in his hand—whitey yellow it was; an' on the floor, a foot or two from their big boots, was a mash o' bluey grey stuff. That there stuck in the frame was the biggest mossel left, the rest was stamped into grit. They had no hats on—maybe they'd rolled off when they tumbled—an' their hair was longer than was common even for an old-time sailorman; but their ears peeped through the wisps, an' the shape o' them, an' the shape o' their hands, was as plump an' good as if they were havin' no more than a dog's snooze till the bo'sun whistled. I said as much to Clark.

"Bo'sun?" says he; "I guess Davy Jones was the last bo'sun that piped them to quarters. Tell you what, Towson; see that bluey grit there, an' what's in the chap's hand? I'll lay a dollar they picked up somethin' in the ice that scared them to death, an' it was in that smashed grit!"

"Maybe he was right. In my own belief the thing had been some kind of a hollow case, with more in it than what that hand gripped. Some kind of a gas, maybe, or fluid that turned to gas, an' in the turnin'—but, there, it's all guesswork.

"When it comes to bettin'," says Brady, "I'll bet I'm goin' below; an' as the door's battened, here's my road!"

"Leaning forward, he gripped the iron bar with his left hand, an' caught a grab o' the edge o' the skylight with his right to hoist himself up. But as his fingers closed inwards over the ledge he flung himself back with a yell.

"Preserve us! What's that?"

"Then he stood starin', his great mouth

wide open an' droppin' at the corners. 'Twas all one as if he'd seen a ghost.

"Shucks!" says Clark, "did ye never face a dead man before? That kind can't hurt ye."

"Ever face a dead man? Aye, did I," answers Brady, the Irish in him flarin' up; "an' if ye give me any more o' yer lip, I'll be facin' another, an' mighty quick, too. Who said dead men?—though, be the hokey! 'twas all the feel of a corpse."

"Then why don't ye go down!"

"For answer Brady leant one hand on the bar as before and bent cautiously forward. The other hand he rested on the outer edge o' the skylight, an' I took notice he didn't put as much as a tip of his finger across the rim. Down he lowered himself, slowly down, down, down, like as if he was goin' to drink, until his face was level with the bar an' the edge o' the wood. Then, as it dipped below the line, he jumped back like before.

"None o' yer tricks, Clark!" he yelled.

"Tricks!" says Clark. "Is the fool gone mad?"

"Didn't ye slop somethin' cowl'd an' wet in me face?"

"You're crazed," says Clark, "clean crazed. Where would I get anythin' cold or wet in such a swelter o' heat? No one stirred a finger. Here, I'll go below."

"Sittin' on the edge o' the wood, he gripped the bar, slewed himself round, an' made as if to drop his legs through the skylight; but all of a sudden he stopped, an' I heard him gasp.

"By gum!" says he, an' his face went white. "That's queer—that's darned queer!"

"What's the matter, Clark?" said Brady, jeerin' him. "Why don't ye go down? Is it the dead men y're feared of? Sure, men like them can't hurt ye. God rest their souls!" he added solemnly.

"But Clark never heeded him except to say, 'I'm sorry I spoke, Irish.' An' the fashion he said it, subdued and puzzled-like, meant more than the words, though it wasn't Clark's way to climb down. He was a New Yorker, you remember, and that kind mostly hangs on to their crow, right or wrong. From Brady he turned to me.

"Lay your hand alongside my leg—will ye, Towson?—an' tell me what's got me."

"Then I noticed that, instead of his feet dangling this way an' that, as a man's mostly do, they hung stiff an' cramped-like.

"Got you?" says I; "what could get you? Are you pullin' my leg?"

"No," says he, speakin' very quietly an' with a weak twist of his mouth, "but there's somethin' pullin' mine—leastwavs, holdin' it."



Feel along of me, as I told you, an', for Heaven's sake, hurry !'

"With that I stretched my arm down, palm out, slowly, slowly, the way I'd seen Brady move—though for the life o' me I couldn't have told why, for there was nothin' to see—an', like him, I went back with a jump an' a yell. There, just below the line o' the frame, where there was nothin', nothin' at all but clear air an' sunshine, was a cold spongy clamminess, like dry, soft ice—ice that was a thin, dry jelly, an' that sank under the hand like dough.

"'Why don't ye go down,' says Brady again, 'why don't ye go down, ye Yankee coward ? Is it the dead you're feared of !'

"That stung Clark. Curious, isn't it ! Call a man a cur, an' he grins, or maybe ruffles up a bit ; but call him an English cur, an' he'll shake the life out of you ! To couple Yank with coward was too much for Clark, an' Heaven keep me from ever seein' again the sight I saw then !

"'Who's coward ?' says he. 'Don't talk so much, Irish. Coward yourself, an' come on if you dare ! All hands below !'

"Gripping the bar in front, he swung off an' let himself drop with a thrust up that partly turned him round. For a breath he hung as if upon nothin' ; but I reckon he hadn't fairly let go the bar when he'd have given the world an' all for a fresh hold. Down he floundered, not straight as a man should, but as if he was drownin' an' drownin' in cold pitch that sucked him in by inches. That the stuff, whatever it was, gripped him close, I know, for I saw his clothes run up his leg an' leave it bare ; an' that he repented his foolhardiness I know, for up flew one hand to catch at the bar, up with a wild swing—an' missed it, gritting it with his finger-nails ; an' out flew the other, clutchin' at the wooden ledge, but missed it, too.

"'Help ! Help !' he screamed, with a sob, throwing his head back.

"His eyes caught mine as he went under, though to me an' Brady it was just that his open mouth was below the line o' the skylight. But under he was, for the scream stopped short with a choked gurgle, though his mouth gaped an' his jaw wagged like as if he was chewin' on somethin' soft.

"Up to that we had stood scared and staring ; but as he screamed, our sense came back, an' we plunged forward, grabbing at his hands. But if he was late, so were we. He had slipped past reach, an', as we watched, we saw him light on the table slowly and greasily, an' paw at it vaguely with his feet.

For a minute he swayed there, his big sea-boots makin' no noise on the wood, an' his arms beating the air with cramped jerks, like as if somethin' held his hands. Then he staggered an' rolled sideways to the floor, where he lay on his back, twelve feet away, giving us stare for stare, an' we no more able to help him than if he was fifty fathoms under the sea. As many men as you've fingers I've seen drown, but never one like that ; yet drown he did, if I know what drownin' means ! God have mercy upon him, for it was an awful end ! Three great pants he gave—pants like to split his chest ; then he lay quiet, an', as the hulk rocked to the heave o' the swell, the sunshine through the port played backwards an' forwards across his face without so much as a flaw in its light.

"Brady pulled himself together first. After we'd failed to catch Clark's hands, he had leaned over the skylight, dry sobbin' an' prayin' like a mother by a cradle ; but at last he shook himself, as a dog might comin' out o' water.

"'I'm goin' down, Towson,' says he.

"'Down ?' cried I. 'Down ? Why, man, it's death ! Do you see yonder ?'

"'Arrah, then ! have I eyes ? Isn't it that that takes me down ? How far off's the table ?'

"'Seven feet, be it more or less,' says I, wonderin' if I had a madman on my hands next. 'What's your notion ?'

"'My notion is, the air's froze—not with cowl'd, but with somethin' that was in what's smashed on the floor there. My notion is the cuddy was caulked as tight as a captain's gig, an' when the poor divils broke whatever it was, they found sudden death, for the air must have gone solid in a wink. See how they broke for the door an' missed it. That's my notion, an' I'm goin' to hack the air outen her.'

"Well, sir, hack it out he did, but the bottle went smash, an' the bread turned to dust the minute the fresh air struck it. So did the three poor souls, all but their bare bones, an' their queer clothes crumbled at the touch like burnt paper, so that all that was left was the bit o' stuff you see in the frame there. That's the yarn, an' maybe Irish was right. They say folks can turn air to water now, why not to solid ? For we don't know everything our side the world, for all our cocksure ways. There's a powerful deal goes on beyond 80° South that we know nothin' at all about, an' that's the fact."



# PROFESSOR AHLBORNE, COLLECTOR.

By HAMILTON DRUMMOND.\*



"I CANNOT at present give you my card," said the Professor, laughing, and shifting his towel a little more comfortably on his left hip; "but we have so many tastes in common that perhaps later you will——"

"With pleasure," I interrupted. "What you have told me of your collection—or, rather, what you have not told me—interests me greatly. Don't you think that, as a rule, the guesses and gropings of life are pleasanter than its blunt facts? My curiosity is piqued more

than if you promised me impossibilities."

"And yet," answered he, "if the blunt facts were not to be guessed in the end, nor found for the groping, how exasperating it would be! Think of 'The Lady and the Tiger,' of the mystery that tickles and tantalises through three hundred pages, only to be left unexplained at the end."

"Ah! the mystery!" I cried. "there you have it. It is the mystery of this collection of yours that——"

But he interrupted me in his turn.

"That is not the spirit of the connoisseur. To the savant the mystery should be nothing, the hard fact everything. As for this trifling collection of mine, I said nothing but that it was unique, and contained objects which had no counterpart in London, Paris, Vienna, or Berlin. But we can talk of that later, for here is the shampooer. Do you go first, my dear sir: I do not think I am yet quite done to a turn."

It is not my custom to talk much in the bath. Conversation in a high temperature bores me, and, besides, it is exhausting. Reserve and meditation are, therefore, my rule, but something about the Professor's eyes attracted me. Indeed, there is nothing else at such a time, and in such a place, that could attract. Not even an Antinous, with a complexion varying from boiled salmon to beetroot, his hair awry, and the perspiration beading his shining countenance, could exercise fascinations. But even in the breathless depths of the hot-room there was an alert brightness about his eyes that enticed me from my customary sluggishness, and we presently fell into gossip.

At first it was naturally upon topics in which there could be no two opinions—the vileness of the weather, the virtues of the Government, the slackness of the age, and so on; but at last we discovered we had a passion in common and so drifted into closer talk. As I was something of a "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," a virtuoso, an archaist rather than an antiquary—in fact, what the vulgar call a collector of curios—my laughter and scorn had lately been stirred by a fraud which hoodwinked the curator of a provincial museum. There is no need to gall the man's sores, and, after all, ignorance is to be pitied as well as censured, so I go no nearer the mark. But when I say he had mistaken a later Umbrian for an early Etruscan water-bottle, the world of *Notes and Queries* will understand the hint! On this I fastened, and it may be that the heat of my language matched the range of the thermometer. It was then that the interest of my new acquaintance was specially aroused.

"What!" said he, catching at a phrase

\* Copyright, 1902, by Ward, Lock and Co., in the United States of America.



of mine, and a very good phrase it was, "you say that such expert knowledge is an exact science?"

"An exact science," I repeated, settling myself comfortably on the warm marble. As I say, it was a good phrase, and a good phrase is always soothing to the man who utters it. "To the true empiric—of course, I use the word in its old sense—who speaks out of his personal observation, there is no such thing as an error. Note, the observation must be wide; note, too, it must be keen. No superficial superficialities of observation, as it were, but depth and breadth and length and height. To a man so versed"—and I flung the corner of my spare towel, carelessly, but with a quiet dignity, over my left shoulder—"to such a man mistake is quite impossible."

It was then that I learned we were brother collectors.

"An exact science! Ah! you go beyond me, you go beyond me; and yet I have managed to scrape together a few things in my time which are not utterly contemptible."

"So?" I cried, with just a little of that creepy sensation which comes of the unexpected, and is so like a dash of cold water, "antiquities?"

"Are antiquities your hobby?"

"Hobby?" I echoed; "scarcely hobby. I collect."

Evidently the rebuke went home, for there was an added deference in his tone as he answered—

"I might, indeed, have recognised the master; but, you see, I am just, as it were, feeling my way."

"While I," replied I, as coldly as the circumstances permitted, "have arrived. Arrived," I repeated, for that, too, seemed to me a good phrase. "Hobby? My dear sir, hobbydom is long past with me. And yet," I went on encouragingly, "you have, perhaps, a nice enough little lot of things. It is so, occasionally, with amateurs."

After my reproof he had turned to watch the play of his toes in a puddle on the floor in a deprecatory way which, while it flattered, somewhat annoyed me. I like a man to look me in the face when I talk to him—he understands better what is said; and when I speak, I speak to be understood. Perhaps he felt that himself, for as I ended he flashed up a look, and I noticed for, perhaps, the third time how clear his glance was and how alert. There was something bird-like about it, I told myself.

"Yes," he answered, keeping his eyes on

mine and speaking slowly, "I *have* picked up a few peculiar things, interesting things, too. Indeed, I may say my collection is in some respects unique, and contains specimens for which there is no counterpart anywhere so far as I know."

"Oh! come!" I cried. "South Kensington!"

"South Kensington? No, nor anywhere else in London, nor Paris, nor in Europe. Even America cannot match them."

"Armour? Coins? Jewels? Pottery? Glasswork?"

"H'm; my taste is catholic, and these are all well enough. But armour? Armour is cumbersome, and is it really rare? The more modern it is, the more elaborate. As for pottery, I grant the interest and the antiquity—that water-bottle, for instance. But I am a traveller, and pottery is perishable. Small compass suits me best. Good goods and little parcels, you know."

At this point we were interrupted, and seeing that he was disinclined to speak of his treasures—as he supposed them to be—in the presence of the unsympathetic vulgar, I let the subject drop, nor did we renew it until just before I passed into the hands of the renewer of youth, and then only in the few sentences already told. But at the door of the baths we again met, and having exchanged cards walked together a block or two.

"Come and see what I have," said he cordially. "My way lies to the left, and so I must say 'Good-bye.' My collection is small—understand that. I make no pretence to diffuseness; but without affectation I may say it is select, and I am sure it will please you. Shall we say to-morrow at three o'clock? Good! Oh! I assure you it gratifies me that a man like yourself, a connoisseur, expert and critical, should see my few trifles. And—yes, I will even add this, if only to ensure me the pleasure of a visit—few as they are, they are all well worth the seeing."

With that we shook hands. He went northwards leisurely, erect and well groomed, while I strolled on westward, marvelling greatly, for it is only justice to myself to say that I knew every collection of repute both in Europe and Europe beyond seas—in art, America is only Europe over again—and yet here I was at fault.

His card told me nothing. "Professor Ahlborne" in small Old English, printed, not engraved, and "18, Martelli Street" written with pencil in the left-hand lower corner. That he should have no fixed address was





"I cannot at present give you my card," said the Professor."

natural, seeing that he had described himself as a bird of passage, but Martelli Street was beyond me, in spite of a fair knowledge of London's highways. To satisfy my curiosity I turned into the first post-office, and, looking up a directory, found it to be an apparently obscure street lying to the north-west, and so had my curiosity still further whetted. With such a collection as he so broadly hinted at, how came he to be quartered in so shabby a neighbourhood? Was he a fraud, or only self-deceived, pluming his poor geese as white-breasted swans? In either case the proof promised some amusement, and if his diamonds of Golconda were Paris paste, as I was persuaded was the truth, he need look for no mercy from me. A touch of patronage in his tone had ruffled me; it was a thing I was more accustomed to give than to receive, and to set

him right in his wrongness would be a holy satisfaction. Of course, collectors, as a class, are the most tolerant of men, but at times they *do* feel that way.

Martelli Street fully realised my overnight's forecast. It was more than plebeian, it was vulgar; and as I looked along its dismal lines of dingy lodging-houses, where every ancient brown-brick front was as solemnly melancholy as its neighbour, and where the decaying respectability of the pure residential was in a death-grip with the encroachment of enterprising shop-fronts, I more and more marvelled how such a collection as Ahlborne's could find even a temporary resting-place amid such sordid surroundings.

Number eighteen was as gloomy and depressing as numbers seventeen or nineteen; and from the dog-eared card of "Lodgings to Let" propped against the upper sash of



the dirty window, and the fly-blown bust that libelled Sir Walter Scott from the fan-light over the door, to the tottering chimney-pots and broken eave-gutters, it was as little suggestive of the refined in art as an inky schoolboy is of the Master of Balliol. In both cases the possibilities were of the most rudimentary kind, nor did the slattern who opened the door promise any better as a curator of the rare and beautiful.

"Professor Ahlborne?" said I, with a subtle mixture of doubt and interrogation in my voice.

The domestic genius which is known as "general" is—in London, at least—either abnormally sharp or imperviously dull. This specimen was the latter. Possibly the garb of West End was a rare thing in Martelli Street, for she dropped her arms limply to her sides and stared, open-mouthed, and I was about to translate the inquiry oblique into the inquiry direct, when Ahlborne himself replied.

"Ah! this is good of you, Mr. Carshall!" (I am Carshall. No doubt you have heard of me, the man who wrote that pamphlet on "Neolites and National Education," which is to be found in every public library in the Kingdom; I sent it myself, so it must be there if you ask for it.) "Come right in! No need for you to trouble,

Mary; I will show the gentleman upstairs myself."

The interior of number eighteen matched its exterior admirably. The expected was all there, and aggravatingly evident. Whoever knows half-submerged London knows number eighteen Martelli Street. There was the worn waxcloth on the narrow floor, the gaunt stretch of marble-papered wall on the right, broken only by a gapped line of



"Cleopatra valued it at fifty thousand sesterces."



hat-pegs, the similar gaunt stretch on the left, pierced by two doors bearing the signs-manual of many generations of lodgers. At the back, a dingy flight of stairs upward and a dingy passage backward. A flaring oleograph of Leonardo's "Last Supper" hung between the two doors, the only piece of colour in all the melancholy dejection, and a brazen offence that flaunted its crime shamelessly. If Ahlborne could stand *that*, then, whatever might be his knowledge of antiquities, his artistic perceptions must be blunt indeed.

At the stair-foot he met me.

"This is good of you!" he repeated, shaking hands with such a firm clasp that my doubts as to his good faith disappeared as if by magic. There are few things pleasanter in common social life than a rightly used hand-clasp, and few things rarer. If Ahlborne could grip a hand like that, then he was at least sincere. "Good of you indeed! But I do not think you will regret your visit. What! You find the surroundings incongruous? Wait, wait; many a rough shell holds a goodly pearl! But I had better say no more, lest, expecting overmuch, you may be disappointed; though"—and turning on the landing he looked me keenly in the face as if to measure my scepticism, "I do not think so—I do not think so."

With a frank friendliness of welcome that charmed me at the moment, though later it struck me as odd between such casual acquaintances, he took my hand for the second time, pressing it warmly, and at the same instant threw open the door at the opposite side of the cramped landing.

"You would scarcely have looked for a room like this in such a place, would you?" he went on, drawing me forward. "'Tis more like a *salon* in the Louvre than an apartment in Martelli Street. Confess that my collection and I are passably housed."

To be candid, I was startled, fairly startled, at the revelation, and from the smile in Professor Ahlborne's keen eyes as they searched my face it was plain that he saw and enjoyed my surprise. No wonder! In place of the mean and dingy two-pair-back, with its frowsy curtains, threadbare carpet, and grimy windows, there stretched before us a room of truly noble proportions, moulded, gilded, niched, pillared, and draped as could have become a palace. Severe in style, lofty, and of ample length and width, it compelled an ungrudging appreciation. The light was subdued but sufficient, the appointments admirable and in excellent taste.

"Passably housed!" I cried, with an involuntary gesture of amazement. "You are too modest, Professor. I had not thought there was such a private hall in all London. It must be unique. How did you discover it?"

"Oh! you Londoners, you Londoners! What, after all, do you know of your own city outside of a dozen fashionable streets? You like it, then? What do you think of this cabinet?"

Up to that moment I had only gathered a general conception of the outlines of the room, but now, as he took me by the arm, I was seized with fresh wonder at the exquisite piece of sixteenth century work to which he called my attention, and had I been permitted I would gladly have gone over its marvels of carving and delicate marquetry in detail, but Ahlborne playfully stopped me.

"The mere furnishings you can see another day if they interest you, Mr. Carshall. Have pity on an amateur's impatience, for I am all eagerness to show my little collection to such an expert as you are."

"Oh! yes, yes; that collection. Remember, Professor, you have called it unique. To such a man as I am that is a large word and needs justification."

"Be it so. What shall I show you first? Something small, a *hors-d'œuvre*, as it were, to whet your appetite. This should serve."

Pulling out a drawer of the cabinet, he took from its depths a small object which for a moment he held concealed in the palm of his left hand while he looked from me to it, and back again to me, as if half in doubt.

"An intaglio by Phidias," he said suddenly, slipping it gently into my extended fingers as he spoke; "a Medusa's head, and, I am persuaded, the original of Da Vinci's famous picture."

Mechanically I turned to the light and bent over the agate oval. Unfortunately I had not brought my pocket-glass, but my eyes are good and there was no room for carping. The workmanship was consummately delicate and yet sharply clear. There, curving coil on coil, were the writhing monsters, instinct and hissing with life, and from the centre of the twisting brood, like a bird from the depths of its nest, the divine beauty of the Gorgon looked out, terrible in spite of its minute proportions.

"Phidias? Phidias?" I said stupidly, but with no mind to deny the origin. The charm was too matchless for easy criticism. "Why, how——?"

"Ah! one word at the outset; let 'hows'



and 'whys' be for the present. I have proof for all I say, but it can wait. Such dry-as-dust testimony spoils the poetry of art. Or rather, let what you shall see later vouch for this."

Taking the intaglio, he replaced it carefully in the cabinet, and lifting in its place another small object he turned to me again with the same hesitancy and the same keen watchfulness.

"Are you suspicious?" said I satirically, for his manner nettled me. "I can assure you I am passably honest—for a collector."

"No," replied Ahlborne, speaking slowly, "but this is a thing you will recognise, and—and—bah! you know the Tavernier diamond?"

"The Tavernier diamond!" I cried. "What! The blue diamond that was brought to Europe in 1642, and—impossible; it was lost in the Terror."

"What was lost may be found, Mr. Carshall. Judge for yourself."

"The Tavernier diamond!" I muttered, taking the stone he held out to me on the palm of his hand. "The Tavernier? Of course I know it. Who does not that knows—why—why—it is the jewel itself! Professor Ahlborne, how did you come by this?"

"Ah! we collectors have our own methods. As I said before, we had better leave 'wheres' and 'hows' aside. I am very proud of that stone, Mr. Carshall; is it not beautiful?"

"Beautiful? Beautiful past words. It is a wonder, a dream of beauty, a delight. They were right, truly, when they called it *un beau violet*. What a depth of colour it has! and what fire!—it is a sun-steeped sea. No wonder Louis le Grand was proud of possessing such a treasure. But why have you kept its existence secret?"

"That I might continue to possess it," answered the Professor drily; "or, at least, possess it in peace. Do I want the police of Europe continually at my heels? No, thank you!"

"But where has it lain hidden all these years?"

"All these years! Three generations, perhaps, and what are they in the life of such a stone? If three generations stagger you, what will you say to the jewel which lies bedded in this ivory casket? The carvings are curious and interesting. Oriental, you will notice. They are scenes from the life of Gautama. It—the box, that is—dates from Genghis Khan, but this pearl—observe its lustre, its size, its purity, its absolute

sleek roundness. To me it is perfection—it goes back yet another twelve and a half centuries."

Snapping back the lid of the casket, an oblong box no bigger than my clenched hand, but a marvel of the most delicate carving, the ivory mellowed to that soft richness of colour which is the delight and the despair of the antiquarian, he disclosed the largest and most perfect pearl I have ever handled—a veritable lamp, translucent, lustrous, and of a flawless outline.

"Cleopatra valued it at fifty thousand sesterces."

"Cleopatra?"

"Yes, you remember that famous draught? Well, this is——"

"Oh! but," I cried, "it was lost!"

"Lost!" he echoed scornfully. "To science there is no such word as 'lost.' Besides, the Serpent of old Nile was a minx and had her methods. Now, I will let you into a secret. My collection is small, because it contains nothing but what the world calls lost, and for that very reason it is unique. There you have my hobby, Mr. Carshall."

"But——" I began.

With a gesture he checked me.

"Let me anticipate your objection. You would say I am imposed upon. Neither you nor I have leisure to argue that, only, for my part, I do not believe I am imposed upon. Remember your own words yesterday, 'To the man who knows, this is an exact science.'"

"But," I began again, rolling round in the hollow of my hand the splendid glistening sphere as I spoke, and this time he let me finish, "each of these is a fortune. Is Ahlborne, by chance, another name for Rockefeller?"

"You, too, are a collector," said he, with a whimsical puckering of the mouth, "and so I may be frank. When we buy a thing we do not tell all we know! The old rag-picker, whose forefather looted the Garde Meuble in '92, knew as little of blue diamonds as the Egyptian *fellah* did of pearls. Was it my business to instruct them? Robbery? Bah! you are a collector and so am I. The methods of the fraternity are common to all; let there be no hypocrisy, I beg of you."

Whereat I smiled, as, no doubt, the soothsayers of old smiled when in secure seclusion. There's many a truth a man will maintain in the face of the world and yet give the lie to in his private closet.

The next hour was a bewilderment, and as treasure after treasure in too quick succes-





"A dingy, fusty, degraded and degrading lodging-house parlour."

sion passed through my hands, was examined, tested, verified, the Tenth Commandment was shivered to untraceable atoms a score of times. "Thou shalt not covet!"

Pshaw! to the true collector possession is the one essential, and you might as well say "Thou shalt not live!" And what a temptation it was! There were parchments, coins, signets, cameos, drinking-cups, jewels, carvings, and every one with a history, until my brain fairly reeled and, like the Queen of the South, I had no more strength in me!

But at last he paused.

"There is still one thing more. I seldom show it, and never to those who scoff."

"Are there such?" I cried. "Surely not; or if there are, they must be know-nothings, narrow, jealous, unwilling to admit their own poverty. I hope you do not bracket me with these?"

"No, no; but this," and laying his hand in the depth of the open drawer he eyed me wistfully, "this is——"

"Yes, this is——?"

"Do you remember the Coming and the Passing of Arthur?" he asked abruptly. "The 'huge cross-hilted sword . . . rich with jewels, elfin Urim . . . bewildering heart and eye'?"



"What!" I gasped, "Excalibur? Arthur's sword?"

Ahlborne nodded gravely.

"Arthur's sword," he said, "whose

"Haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work  
Of subtlest jewellery.

"Picture it, Mr. Carshall, picture it, and do not stint your imagination, for Sir Bedevere was right, and, like him, you—

"Never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till you die,  
Not though you live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt."

With a reverent gesture he turned anew to the open drawer. "See and judge for yourself."

Ah! but it was wonderful, wonderful! That night I set myself to describe its beauty while the memory was neither dimmed nor exaggerated by time, but the flashing of the million points of light, the rippling play of colour, the elusive interchange of many fires rushed afresh into my brain, dazzling me, and I laid my pen aside—overwhelmed.

In silence I took it, in silence I held it, drinking in the marvel, and noting how sharply the antique lettering still showed on the steel blade, that "oldest tongue of all this world," with its strange and mystical paradox. I think my awed admiration, as, with a sigh, at last I handed it back, must have satisfied even Ahlborne, for there was a patent triumph in his eyes—a triumph worthily earned—as he carefully laid the sword once more in its resting-place. As I am an honest man, I did not grudge him his trophy. Reverence and awe were too strong upon me, and for the time the petty envies of the world were cast out.

"Well?"

"Let me go," I said. "I have seen enough."

I think he understood my feeling, for he nodded slowly twice or thrice, and linking his arm in mine walked with me to the door. On the landing we paused, and as he drew the door behind him he took my hand to say "Good-bye," and while he did so I was suddenly aware how the excitement of the afternoon had wearied me. In an instant I became a sorely tired man; but if the fatigue showed in my face, Ahlborne made no comment.

"You will come again?"

"Not will I, but may I?"

"They pleased you, then?" and his face lit up. "I thought they would. But let me see; for a week I am a busy man. Shall

we say eight days hence?" I suppose I showed my chagrin at the delay, for he went on hastily, "It is the first hour of leisure I have; there is my profession——"

"Ah! by the way, what is your speciality?"

"Natural science. Then in eight days?"

"In eight days," I answered, "and—and—to hide these treasures of yours is a crime against light; come, Ahlborne, may I bring a friend?"

"I think not," said he, after a moment's hesitation. "No, not next time; later, perhaps, though I am doubtful whether—you see, I collect to please myself, and these South Kensington people—but we can talk of that next week. Besides, being alone, you may be as leisurely as you choose, and these manuscripts of Tacitus are worth studying. Indeed, now I think of it, oblige me by not speaking of what you have seen until you know the details a little more fully. Misdescriptions and half justice are my abhorrence."

That was the end of it then, and I frankly confess that the eight days which followed were, perhaps, the longest I have ever lived. The only thing that smoothed the passage of time was the sketching out of a little monograph to be called "The Dead Alive," which I flattered myself would raise something of a stir when published. Yet even in the preparation of this—a simple matter for a man who has written on "Neolites and National Education"—I found Ahlborne's wisdom demonstrated. At least another afternoon over these relics of many generations was needed to do them justice, for, curiously enough, my recollection was blurred and indefinite; and, beyond a cloudy remembrance of what they must have been, I was utterly at fault. The form was there, the colour was there, but the outlines lacked sharpness and the colours ran confusedly one into the other. There was the smoky glare of phosphorescence rather than clear light.

The appointed day, therefore, found me all the more eager for Martelli Street, and this time I passed over the solemn melancholy of its precise terraces with an easy optimism. Martelli Street was nothing, its dingy and depressing uniformity of inartistic meanness was nothing, and I declare that my heart was beating as boldly and as gaily as the knocker when I rapped at number eighteen.

Apparently it was the lady *châtelaine* herself who opened the door for me.

"Professor Ahlborne?"



"Oh! he has gone, sir!" Then, with a rising inflection, "He left yesterday."

"Yesterday?" and my face must have looked very blank as I said it. "But I have an appointment!"

"Very sorry, sir, I'm sure, *very* sorry. But such gentlemen as the Professor do wander about, don't they? Not but what he was always the gentleman to me."

"Gone!" I repeated, stupidly, I fear; then a light broke upon me, "Ah! I understand, he was afraid I would tell his secrets; and my monograph, how can I finish it? And who would believe it now?"

"Indeed, sir," answered she politely, "I don't know. The Professor certainly left last night."

"Might I see his room—the one on the landing to the back?"

Fortunately she misunderstood my reason for making the request. From a troublesome casual I suddenly developed into a possible successor to Ahlborne, and I confess I did not undeceive her. Had I done so, it might have put a stay upon more than the outburst of adjectives in the midst of which she led the way upstairs, and I was eager to refresh my memory with a closer examination of the premises where the Professor housed his hoarded wonders. Nor did I pay much attention to my guide. My mind was too full of the sharp disappointment to heed her chatter. One thing, however, went home to me as she paused on the landing with her hand on the door. It was "twenty-two and six a week."

"What!" I cried, remembering the glorious proportions of the noble room

which lay beyond, "twenty-two and sixpence a week?"

"Never less," she replied austere; nay, if I knew what bridling was, I would say she bridled—"never less."

Then she pushed the door back. The stairs were the same; the landing the same; the door the same. I recognised a particularly large thumb-mark on its edge. But the room! I will swear I never saw the room before. The hangings, pillars, niches had disappeared; the painted ceiling, the antique mouldings, the cool and shadowy depth, the noble breadth and height were wiped from it as completely as a sponge wipes clear a slate. Beauty, proportion, dignity were alike gone, and in their place was a dingy, fusty, degraded and degrading lodging-house parlour, no more like the *salon* of the week before than a slum tenement is like Windsor Castle.

To the left, where the Henri Quatre cabinet had stood, was an unpolished, time-worn chiffonier covered with a stained and raw-edged cloth. To this I turned; but before my bewildered brain could find expression of its wonder, the woman had pounced on a square of white pasteboard lying conspicuously in sight.

"The Professor's card," said she. "Perhaps he has left his address, after all."

But she was wrong. This is what it contained:—

HERR AILBORNE.

PROFESSOR OF CLAIRVOYANCE.

*Hypnotic Séances a speciality.*

And in the corner, "Terms Moderate."

The monograph still remains unwritten.





# THE VANISHED PRIME MINISTER.

By HENRY A. HERING.\*



HE mysterious disappearance of the Prime Minister of England, which caused such a sensation throughout the whole of civilisation, is within the recollection of the youngest ratepayer, yet the actual facts of the case have never been made public; even the Duke himself did not know them. But there is really no reason why they should any longer be withheld, and they are now freely given to the world.

On the day of his disappearance the Duke of Guiseley, who, according to the usual custom, filled the offices of Prime Minister and Secretary for Foreign Affairs, dined alone at his official residence in a state of considerable disquietude. North, south, east, and west there was trouble, and nothing but trouble. In Africa, with a European Power and with a native tribe. In India there was fire, pestilence, and famine; there was the usual business on the frontier, and the retiring nature of the rupee was never more remarkable. There was friction with the United States and with Russia. At home there was a big strike and a Budget deficit to face, and the by-elections were going the wrong way. All these things had happened before, but they had never occurred at one and the same time. No wonder that the Prime Minister was upset. Feeling unequal to social intercourse, he decided to ignore his half-promise to Lady Merton, and instead to take a solitary stroll. He left his house at nine o'clock, intending to return in an hour or so, and never again crossed its threshold as Prime Minister.

His Grace walked along the crowded streets, in which he was only one inconspicuous item, and for some time revelled in the sense of his own insignificance. If he could only lose himself in the throng and be forgotten! Let

others take up the tangled skein of the State. So his thoughts ran on, until he suddenly drew himself up and dismissed them as unworthy of himself. He was a strong man, and could bear the burden of it all—a strong man, a little depressed just then, he admitted, and, by the way, thirsty—that over-seasoned savory, no doubt. Yes, he had a thirst, and he looked round for means to quench it.

Ah! here was an evidently popular buffet. Should he enter? No, he would be recognised by the gilded youth who crowded it, and his position would be a little undignified. Two doors further on was a chemist's shop. That would do. The Duke walked in and asked for a glass of water.

The chemist's assistant, who was at that moment engaged behind the counter in working up the atomic weights for an examination, looked up abstractedly.

"Water? Certainly, sir," he said, and with his head full of symbols and figures he groped for the bottle of distilled water which was handy on the shelf. Absently he filled a glass and gave it to the Prime Minister, who drank and was refreshed. The shilling left on the counter recalled the assistant's wandering thoughts.

"He must have wanted it badly," he said to himself, and then his eye wandered to the shelf in estimation of value given. A wave of horror overspread the assistant's face. He had used the wrong bottle.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, "I've given him the Water of Lethe!"

And so he had.

Now, the peculiarity of the Water of Lethe was that it brought absolute forgetfulness to the mind of the drinker for a space of time depending on the size of the draught. The chemist's assistant had pretty well filled the glass, and the Prime Minister had drunk it to the last drop, for he was very thirsty; and cold sweat gathered on the assistant's brow when, after a brief calculation, he knew that the gentleman who had left the shilling on the counter would for the space of three years and a month or two forget all that he had ever learned, all that had gone before, even his own name and every debt he owed. He felt a little easier when he reflected that

\* Copyright, 1901, by Henry A. Hering, in the United States of America.



the drinker would be a long time before he knew who was to blame for the catastrophe—and much might happen in the interval.

The Water of Lethe was in much request by ladies or gentlemen who had done things which prevented their consciences from resting at nights. Two drops would lull the most vigorous conscience to sleep for eight hours, and usually the water was not taken in greater quantities. Never till that night had a whole glassful been drunk straight off, and it was particularly unfortunate that the drinker should have been the Prime Minister of England, for his mind held information of extreme value to the nation.

After leaving the shop he was conscious of a soothing sensation. All the troubles of the day seemed to disappear. Then he forgot there ever were troubles—ever were pleasures—ever was anything—forgot all, all;—and the Prime Minister of England walked blindly across the road at the imminent risk of his life, sat down on a seat in a park, and nodded benevolently at the moon and the stars, blinking like a new-born babe.

He sat there for a long time in a state of vacuous placidity—thinking of nothing, just as he had done for a few days, maybe weeks, some sixty years before. He stayed there so long that respectable people ceased to pass, and at length very shady ones came. There were two of them—two burglars out on business.

"If there ain't a bloomin' torf all by 'is little self alone!" said one of them, and there was a hurried exchange of whispers.

"Fine evenin', sir," said the other, seating himself beside the Duke, who smiled fatuously, but said nothing.

"My crikey!—dumb," said the first speaker, taking his seat on the other side.

"Sorry for yer hinfirmitiy, sir," the other continued; but it was evident the gentleman didn't hear him.

"Deaf, too," said the first burglar. Then he started making polite remarks about the weather in the deaf-and-dumb alphabet. The swift movement of the hands and fingers pleased the Prime Minister, and he crowed with delight.

"Dotty!" exclaimed both burglars simultaneously.

"Deaf, dumb, and dotty! You're a gem, old party," said burglar Number One, as he caught hold of the Duke's watch and chain and skilfully abstracted them from his person. The other felt in his coat and took his pocket-book and papers. In two minutes they had absolutely cleaned out the Prime Minister's

pockets and taken possession of all his jewellery.

At first their victim evinced signs of alarm, but he quickly relapsed into serene stolidity, and the burglars grew hilarious at the size of their haul and its ease. Then burglar Number One insisted on changing headgear with the Duke, and Number Two would have his coat. Finally they became boisterous in their mirth, and one of them knocked the helpless statesman on the grass, whereupon the poor man howled vigorously, and the burglars decamped, the one in a silk hat, and the other in a smart overcoat with an astrachan collar.

Some minutes afterwards an individual came sauntering along with unsteady gait. He was a red-whiskered man in a bowler hat, and he walked with his hands in his pockets. His attention was arrested by the sight of an old gentleman in evening dress, with a corduroy cap wrong side up on the back of his head, sitting on the grass and sobbing violently. The new-comer stopped and stared, stared very hard indeed, and then burst into unsympathetic laughter.

"Well, I'm——" he commenced, and then he stopped short, as though he couldn't find a participle adequate for the occasion. He went up to the Prime Minister and stood over him.

"Good evenin', your Grace," he said.

The Duke did not respond to the overture. He stared vacantly at him and continued sobbing.

The red-whiskered man sat down on the vacant seat, and apostrophised him in unsteady accents.

"It's a shockin' position to be in, your Grace," he said. "The Prime Minister drunk and incapable—wearin' a blue ribbon, too. It's a case for the police. Your Grace may remember once threatenin' me for less."

The Duke evinced no recollection of the circumstance, but society seemed to comfort him, for he ceased to cry.

"I wonder now whether I ought to call for the police or send for the Leader of the Opposition, your Grace?" continued the man. "You've said some nasty things about him lately. I think it 'ud look well in a charge-sheet, though. Hi! Robert!" he shouted.

But the police were not at hand at that moment, and a new idea seemed to strike the red-whiskered man, for he slapped his knees with glee and then got up.

"Allow me to assist your Grace," he said with much ceremony. The Duke took his proffered hand and struggled to his feet.





"There were two of them."

"Will your Grace condescend to accept my poor hospitality?" the man went on. "It's Robson. You remember Robson, your Grace, your faithful valet, Robson—poor, injured Robson? Blowed if he do, though," he muttered. "He's too far gone. But he's steady enough on his pins. He's been hypnotised, that's what it is." Gaining confidence from the Duke's evident helplessness, he seized his arm and tucked it under his own. "Come on, Guiseley," he said, and marched him away. Once he stopped to pull up the collar of the Duke's coat, and to button it in front, lest the white shirt should attract attention. Further on he hailed a hansom and gave the driver an address, bundled the Duke inside, and himself followed. Twenty minutes later they stopped at the corner of an obscure street in Gray's

Inn Road. Mr. Robson paid the fare and marched his companion on a few streets further, then down a still obscurer turning, and finally stopped before a very humble dwelling. He inserted a key in the lock, opened the door, pushed the Duke in, and closed it again. Then he turned on the gas.

"Welcome, your Grace," said Mr. Robson. "Welcome to my lowly abode. I'm sorry it ain't better, but your Grace was stingy, and the perks were small. Still, it runs to beer, your Grace." He produced a couple of half-pint bottles, drew the corks, and filled two glasses. "Your 'ealth, Guiseley!" he said, as he raised one to his lips.

The Duke followed his example and drank. Mr. Robson waved him to a chair.

"Now, your Grace," said he, "we've got accounts to settle. You discharged me for



drink and theft. A jolly old toper on the quiet like yourself should know somethin' on the drink question, so we'll hold the first charge proved; but it was 'orrid mean to say I had no right to your clothes, for your fit is my fit, 'cept in 'ats. You've a natty bit of suitin' on just now, and I'm short of evenin' dress at the moment—had to decline a pressin' invitation in consequence from the Markiss of Spiers and Pond only yesterday. Besides, it ain't safe for a man of your years to be sittin' on the grass in claw-'ammers. I'll find you somethin' more suitable for agricultural purposes, and I'll trouble your Grace to change."

He went upstairs and quickly returned with some rough wear, and under his skilful superintendence the Duke undressed and put them on.

"Seems like old times, Guiseley," Mr. Robson remarked during the process. "We never took more pains when we were agoin' to dine at Marlborough House, did we? Hullo! what have you done with your ticker, and your links and studs? If your bloomin' purse ain't missin'! Well, if this ain't rough! It's just like yer, you mean old fossil!" and Mr. Robson gave vent to his annoyance in language marked and expressive. It required another bottle of beer to soothe his injured feelings, and then he went on, "The Blue Ribbon I'll keep as an heirloom, Guiseley; the Bath would have contented me, but when the Prime Minister himself brings the Garter, it ain't for me to decline." He carefully stuck it athwart his waistcoat. "Now, my lords," said he, placing the Duke's glasses on his nose, and mimicking his action in debate, "the noble Markiss 'as taunted me with ignorance of the dwellin's of the indignant poor. I fling his remarks back in his eye, for this very night I visited the hovel of my old friend Robson—good old Robson—sandy-whiskered Robson—who treated me to 'arf a pint of prime October,



"And your 'air's too long, Guiseley!"

and let bygones be bygones, like the blamed good sort he is!

"Which reminds me," he resumed in his natural tones. "You may remember objectin' to my whiskers, Guiseley; you said they was glarin', and made me shave; but if whiskers is bad, a long, foreign-lookin', pointed beard is wuss, much wuss, and yours 'as got to go."

He produced a pair of scissors and cut the Prime Minister's beard close to the skin. "And your 'air's too long, Guiseley; I was allus implorin' you to get it cut. They'll be



makin' you Poet Laureate if you don't mind." Mr. Robson applied the scissors remorselessly to the Duke's venerable locks, till it might well be doubted if even his Grace's secretaries would have recognised him in the grizzled old man in the pilot jacket who sat there serenely blinking at the ex-valet.

At last Mr. Robson laid down the scissors, but for some time longer he apostrophised his late master. He only gave in from want of breath and the absence of response.

"Well, Guiseley," said he in conclusion, "if you're above talkin', it ain't for me to detain you. I should very much like to fortygraph you and send your picture round to the crowned heads of Europe. If one reached Windsor Castle, you'd jolly well get the sack, my boy; but I can't do it, as the electricity isn't on to-night. Anyway, I'll send you on where you'll be more appreciated. Let me see, I wonder who'd fancy you most?"

Mr. Robson looked round for an inspiration, but it was not immediately forthcoming. "Salvation Army Shelter, that's the best I can think of," he muttered, "unless I shot you down at the French Ambassador's; I think he'd like to see you in your present rig-out. Then his eye chanced on a visiting-card placed conspicuously in front of the clock on the mantelshelf. A broad grin spread over Mr. Robson's face. "Yes, that'll do. What a surprise packet for the old bantam! Teach him not to be so free with his bloomin' pasteboards in future!"

He reached down the card, which bore the inscription —

REV. ELIJAH TIMMINS, B.A.,  
61, Rebecca Street,  
Bethnal Green, N.E.

"I'm goin' to send you to this white-chokered gent, Guiseley," he said. "No doubt you'd prefer an archbishop or a cardinal, but we don't keep those articles in stock just now. This is a gentleman who runs a conventicle, and if you tell him who you are, he'll give you some straight tips on the Disestablishment question. Blowed if Guiseley ain't asleep! He's no sort of company to-night. Here, wake up, old man!"

The Duke evinced a strong disinclination to move. It needed a good deal of persuasion and some force to get him out of the house, and then it was ten minutes or so before Mr. Robson found a vehicle for his purpose—a four-wheeler.

"Chawles," said he to the driver, "I want you to take my friend to this address. Tell

the reverend gentleman you've brought his nephew from—er—Majorca."

"From what?" growled the cabby.

"Majorca. Don't forget. It's one of the Balearic Islands. There are four of them—Majorca, Minorca, Alderney and Sark," explained Mr. Robson, with knowledge derived from long intercourse with a Prime Minister.

"I know 'em," said the cabby coldly. "Once had a hen from those parts."

"By-bye, old man," said Robson, when he had thrust the Duke inside and closed the door; "love to Elijah." Then to the driver, "Don't forget—nephew from Majorca." As the cab drove away he added to himself, "And I'd give a sovrn to see the parson's face when he gets him."

It was nearly one o'clock when the cab drove down Rebecca Street and stopped at No. 61. The driver got off his box, rang the bell, and knocked vigorously. In a few minutes a bedroom window opened and a male head in a nightcap protruded.

"Who's there?"

"Your neevy from Minorky," came the answer.

"Who?" cried the astonished minister.

"Your neevy from Minorky. It's one of the Bally Islands," said the cabman.

"I haven't got a nephew in Minorca," said the bewildered parson.

"Of course you 'aven't. You've got 'im 'ere now," replied the Jehu, who was a stickler for precision in conversation.

"I don't know him. It's a mistake," said the minister.

"No mistake at all," shouted the cabman. "'Ere's your own card-de-wisit. Come down and own 'im like a man."

"I shan't!" said the minister.

At this moment a window in the house opposite opened, and another head appeared.

"What's the row?" inquired its owner.

"I've brought a prodigal 'ome, and 'is white-chokered uncle won't take 'im in," explained the indignant cabman.

"Shame!" said the voice. "Shame!"

The minister heard this conversation with dismay. That very evening he had had an extremely unpleasant interview with his deacons, who had been careful to assure him that his growing unpopularity might soon necessitate his removal from that particular sphere of action. It was one of the deacons who had called out "Shame!"

"I can't stop 'ere all night," said the cabby to his fare. "Out you come, and talk to yer affecshunit uncle yerself." Then



was heard the sound of voices disputing, and of violent interjections of wrath from the interior of the cab, from which the Jehu presently emerged, with his fare in his arms. Other windows now opened, other inquiring heads appeared, and the deacon was energetic in his explanation of the situation.

"Your nevv'y's in a dead faint!" shouted the cabman, when he had deposited the Duke on the doorstep. "If you leave 'im out overnight, it'll be easy for you if you git orf with manslaughter. Are you comin' down or not?"

Mr. Timmins no longer hesitated. He was firmly convinced that there was some wretched mistake, but it could be rectified on the morrow. Two minutes later the door was opened and the cabman had his foot inside.

"Ten bob is my fare," he said.

"Ten shillings!" expostulated Mr. Timmins.

"Ten bob, and no less. Cheap enough, too, for bringing yer preshus nevv'y all the way from Minorky. It'll be fifteen if I 'ave to wait much longer."

"My purse, Mary!" called out the luckless minister, and while his wife was searching for it he and the cabman brought in the weary Duke, depositing him on the sitting-room sofa, where he at once fell fast asleep. The cabman was paid and drove away, the neighbours closed their windows, and Mr. and Mrs. Timmins surveyed their guest.

"I've never seen him before," said the minister. "It's some horrible mistake." Then he gloomily inspected his card, which the driver had deposited on the sideboard.

"He has a fine head," remarked his wife, who was the optimist of the family.

"Looks as if he'd just left prison," replied her husband. "But we can do no good to-night. I'll fetch some blankets down, and then we'll leave him."

Mr. Timmins slept little that night, and his wife still less, for an inward conviction was growing upon her. At 5 a.m. she communicated it to her husband.

"Elijah," she said, "it's Uncle Sam!"

"Ah!" was the unsympathetic reply.

"He went to the backwoods of Australia when I was quite a child, and he always said he'd come back. He's very rich."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Mr. Timmins, in whose bosom the ten-shilling fare rankled.

"Depend upon it, I'm right," said his helpmate, and, having settled the matter to her satisfaction, the worthy lady dropped off to sleep.

About seven, hearing movement in the room below, she dressed and went downstairs to welcome her visitor. He was looking out of the window when she entered the room.

"Uncle Sam, I'm glad to see you," she said, going towards him.

The Duke turned. Seeing a smiling face and outstretched hands, he also smiled and advanced, and they shook hands affectionately.

"I hope you feel better this morning?" she went on.

Her visitor said something unintelligible in reply. She repeated the question, and still came the mysterious sounds.

Considerably alarmed, she left the room and ran upstairs to her husband. "It is Uncle Sam," she said, "but he has forgotten his native tongue. He can only speak Australian."

"Rubbish!" said Mr. Timmins.

"Come and see for yourself. I've heard of such things happening."

Mr. Timmins hurriedly dressed, went downstairs, and was introduced. Uncle Sam smiled and shook hands heartily, but nothing understandable came from his lips.

"This is awful, simply awful!" cried the poor minister. "Whatever shall we do with him?"

"Teach him English, to begin with," said his wife. "Uncle Sam—Elijah—Mary," she said to the Duke, indicating the various personalities as she spoke. The Duke followed the sounds and soon mastered them. This scheme of instruction was continued at the breakfast-table, and before the meal was over their visitor showed a nice discrimination between the sounds for marmalade and butter, thereby causing the minister's spirits to rise from zero to a trifle below freezing point.

The news of the arrival of Mr. Timmins's nephew—sometimes mentioned as uncle or grandfather—of course spread rapidly and caused a considerable sensation in the locality; but before the day was over it was almost forgotten in the consternation caused by the disappearance of the Prime Minister. Happening, as it did, in the midst of serious foreign complications, with which the Duke was considered to be the only statesman strong enough to deal, it caused a panic. The Funds fell to 83, and there was a run on the Bank of England. A reward of five thousand pounds for the discovery of the Duke was offered the following day, and subsequently increased to ten, but offered in vain.



It may be asked if no one connected the appearance of the stranger at 61, Rebecca Street with the disappearance of the Prime Minister ; but it would almost have required the gift of second sight to see any resemblance between the grizzled old man in the shabby clothes who couldn't speak English, and the distinguished-looking statesman in evening dress, wearing the Ribbon of the Garter and an astrachan-collared coat, advertised for.

While another was taking up the pilotage of the State, the Duke of Guiseley, now

known as Samuel Bailey, was progressing in elementary education. Though he had to start with the simplest rudiments, he did so with a man's brain and a brain of great power. Within the month he could express his thoughts with comparative ease, and was beginning subtraction ; within the year he could read and write, was learning French, and was as quick at figures as you would expect a Senior Wrangler to be under the circumstances. As he was diligent and liked work he had little difficulty in getting employment, and the thirty shillings a week



" Mr. and Mrs. Timmins surveyed their guest."



he ultimately earned enabled him to considerably assist the Timminses' exchequer. But it was as lamentable as extraordinary that he could say nothing about his Australian property, nor about anything previous to his arrival in Rebecca Street. It was supposed that he had had a stroke.

Thus three years passed—three years, two months, and a day—when one night Samuel Bailey, the respected invoice clerk of Hitchens and Hitchens, indigo merchants, retired to rest feeling strangely excited. He fell into a fitful slumber, waking about midnight in much confusion of thought. Indigo was strangely mixed up with India and the rupee, Nephew Elijah with the French Ambassador, and Mary with Her Majesty herself, while a bewildering succession of equally confused phantasmagoria ran across his brain. Again he dozed and again awoke. This time his thoughts were clearer. "Ah!" he thought, "the Cabinet meets at twelve. I must see the Chancellor before then. I shall have ciphers from Paris and Cairo by eleven, and the Ambassador does not come till four. Then we shall know definitely one way or the other."

He fell fast asleep, and was only awakened by a knock at his door. He wondered why Robson—no, Fuller—didn't come in. Again a knock.

"Yes?" he called out.

"You're late, Uncle Sam," came the reply. "Breakfast has been waiting this half-hour."

Though much astonished at this address, he called out "All right!" sprang out of bed, and pulled up the blind. "Heavens! where am I?" he thought, glancing at the dingy room and the dismal view outside. He caught sight of his face in the glass and was petrified, for he was clean-shaven. And yet there immediately came the consciousness that he had shaved of late. He turned to his watch for the time. This clumsy silver thing wasn't his—his was a gold repeater—and yet that silver one seemed familiar, after all. What a muddle he was in! He gave up speculating, ceased to wonder why Fuller wasn't there to help him to dress, got into his things mechanically, and as mechanically walked downstairs. It was as in a dream. He felt like an actor awaiting his cue.

There were two strangers in the little breakfast-room—no, not strangers, for he knew them—one was Mary and the other Elijah. But who were Mary and Elijah? And why did they call him Uncle Sam?

"I'm afraid you'll be late at the office, uncle," said Mary, and the Duke caught

himself looking at the clock in dismay. Hitchens and Hitchens, indigo merchants, flashed across his brain. He was due there at nine. There were twenty chests of indigo to check. But what about the Cabinet at twelve, and the Ambassador? There must be important despatches and telegrams waiting for him.

The Duke leaned his head on his hand in utter perplexity.

"I'm afraid you're not well, Uncle Sam," said Mrs. Timmins. "Take a day off. I'm sure Mr. Hitchens will allow it. Elijah shall call at the office and explain."

The Duke caught at the suggestion. "Thank you—er—Mary," he said. "I do feel a bit queer. Will you do me the favour of calling upon Mr. Hitchens and explaining, Elijah?"

Mr. Timmins, inwardly wondering at the ceremonious politeness of the old man, promised to do so. He was about to go, when the Duke said "Stop!" and waved him to a seat in an authoritative manner utterly new in Uncle Sam.

"Elijah and Mary," he said, "will you have the goodness to tell me who I am?"

Mr. and Mrs. Timmins glanced at each other in dismay. Was he going to have another attack?

"Why, you are Uncle Sam, of course," said Mary, at length.

"So you seem to think—but I'm not quite sure that I am. In fact, I'm quite sure that I am not," said the Duke, with growing conviction.

"If you are not Uncle Sam, who are you?" asked Mr. Timmins.

"I am the Duke of Guiseley."

Mr. and Mrs. Timmins looked at each other meaningly. "Of course you are the Duke of Guiseley," said Elijah. "We always knew that."

"Then why do you call me Uncle Sam?"

"Oh! that's a pet name we have for you," said Mary.

"But, madam," said the Duke, "what reason is there for a pet name?"

"Quite so," said Mr. Timmins soothingly. "What reason? No reason at all."

The Duke was annoyed at this quibbling, but he kept his temper.

"Will you have the goodness to tell me," he went on, "how long I have been with you?"

"About three years," said Mr. Timmins.

"Three years!" exclaimed the Duke. "Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."





"Bounding down three at a time."

"How did I come?"

"You came in a cab—from Minorca."

"In a cab from Minorca?" cried the astonished statesman.

"We had only the cabman's word for it," Mr. Timmins explained, "and we think he must have been mistaken. You really came from the interior of Australia."

The Duke pressed his hand to his head. His brain was reeling. "If I am not mad, I soon shall be," he said.

"No, no, uncle," said Mrs. Timmins. "We hope not—with rest and quiet. You must stay at home for a time. Elijah shall see Mr. Hitchens and explain."

"Hang Mr. Hitchens!" snapped the sorely

tried Duke. "I beg your pardon, Mary, but I hardly know what I am saying."

"I'm sure you don't, uncle," said Mary. "Just sit quietly here, and I'll get you something soothing."

"Nonsense," said the Duke. "I can't stay here. There are important despatches waiting for me at the Foreign Office. I must attend to them at once, but I shall come back to get to the bottom of this mystery." Saying which the Duke walked towards the door; but Mr. Timmins jumped up and placed himself in front of it, while his wife seized hold of the Duke's hands.

"Sit down, uncle," she said. "I beg of you to calm yourself. Elijah shall go for your letters, and you can answer them here without delay. There is a pillar-box at the corner, you know."

"Madam," cried the indignant Duke, "I beg of you to release my hands. Come away from the door, Elijah."

"I shan't," said Mr. Timmins firmly.

The Duke of Guiseley, being a diplomatist, never attempted to gain by force what persuasion would accomplish. Therefore he now sat down on the sofa.

"Elijah and Mary," he said, "listen to me. I am not mad, as you think I am, nor am I your uncle. I am the Duke of Guiseley. How I got here passes my understanding, but that is of little consequence at the moment. Despatches of vital importance are waiting for me at the Foreign Office, and I must go there at once. You shall come with me, Elijah; and if they refuse to acknowledge me there, I promise to return at once."

The Duke spoke very quietly, and what he said impressed his hearers. It might be wiser to humour the old man than to irritate him by forcible detention.

"All right, uncle," said Elijah. "We'll



go at once. Better have the doctor here at twelve," he whispered to Mary.

At the end of the street, despite Mr. Timmins's remonstrances, the Duke hailed a hansom. He said little on the way—he was trying to arrange his thoughts. Only then did he grasp what an absence of three years meant to him. But he could not believe it. There must be some absurd mistake somewhere. At last they drew up at the Foreign Office. The Duke almost ran up the steps. He went straight to the doorkeeper's office in the entrance-hall and asked, "Is Sir Rupert in?" Sir Rupert Taunton was the Permanent Under Secretary.

"Have you an appointment, sir?" inquired the man.

"No. I am the Duke of Guiseley."

The doorkeeper's deferential demeanour changed. "It's no use," he said. "We've had two of your name calling every week since I came here, and my instructions are to admit no more."

"There, Uncle Sam," said Mr. Timmins, pulling the Duke's coat. "It's no use. Come away."

"Be quiet, Elijah," said his Grace. Then, turning to the attendant, "Will you give me a sheet of paper and an envelope, please?" He said this with the grand air of authority he could adopt when necessary. Many a time it had quenched opposition at a Cabinet council. The doorkeeper did his bidding.

The Duke hastily scribbled a few lines and closed the envelope. "See that Sir Rupert gets it at once," he said.

Uncle Sam's audacity struck terror in the heart of Mr. Timmins; and when a few minutes later there was the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps, Elijah clutched his hat tightly and with his eye measured the distance to the street-door.

An important-looking old gentleman now appeared on the stairs, bounding down three at a time. For a moment he hesitated, then ran up to the Duke, caught his hands, and shook them again and again.

"Your Grace—your Grace!" he said, and the gladdest of tears filled his eyes. The Duke was hardly less affected, while the doorkeeper stood at sympathetic attention.

Then the Duke turned. "There, Elijah," he said, "will you believe me now?"

Mr. Timmins stood there, a man transfixed red and white by turns. He tried to say something, but the words caught in his throat.

"It's all right, Elijah," said the Duke, laying his hand on his shoulder. "Now come upstairs, and Sir Rupert shall explain the mystery to us."

But that Sir Rupert was unable to do.

The reappearance of the Duke of Guiseley, and the extraordinary circumstances connected with it, caused a tremendous sensation in the country. The denizens of Rebecca Street were as gratified as astonished to learn they had for so long harboured a Prime Minister unawares, and the excitement was intense when on the following day the Duke came to have high tea once more with Elijah and Mary. The street was crowded, and the deacon let his windows at a premium. Vociferous cheers for his Grace, interspersed with others for "Old Sam Bailey," greeted his arrival, and when Mary met him on the doorstep, and he kissed her as usual, the excitement reached fever-heat.

The ensuing week Mr. and Mrs. Timmins removed, to make plans for the spiritual welfare of Nonconformists on the Duke's estate, and the frowns of deacons no longer trouble the worthy couple.

The Duke found that his despatches had long since been answered by his successor, so he devoted what time the legal complications consequent on his return allowed him to trying to unravel the mystery of his extraordinary disappearance and metamorphosis; but he devoted it in vain. He himself was at fault. He remembered going for a stroll on the night in question—and then came a terrible blank. The wish for a drink and the purchase of the fateful draught were scarcely registered on his brain when the record had been washed out for ever by the Water of Lethe. He remembered the stroll, and then nothing more till he found himself as Samuel Bailey, living with his nephew Elijah and his niece Mary, at 61, Rebecca Street; and all the expert assistance he called in did not help him one jot.

Two people could have thrown light upon the matter—the one a chemist's assistant, who is always failing in his examinations, owing to his defective knowledge of the atomic weights; the other a red-whiskered man who keeps a low public-house in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane; but somehow, for reasons of their own, they elected to keep silence.



# THE DORMER WINDOW.

By FRED M. WHITE.\*



O you wish to speak to me, General Sherlock?"

"My dear boy, I desire to do more than that," the veteran replied. The white head was bent, the tired eyes were heavy with trouble. "I wish to save you from a ghastly tragedy."

There was a nervous thrill and intensity in the words enough to carry force under any circumstances, but, coming from one absolute stranger to another, they seemed to bite into Ralph Cheriton's consciousness like a saw.

Yet, under other circumstances, he would have laughed. But a gentleman does not usually deride the beard of the veteran who has seen sixty distinguished years in the service of his country.

"These are strange words, General," he replied.

The war-worn soldier sighed. His hair was white as the Afghan snows, his face was covered with deep lines; what the man had once been was mirrored only in his eyes. And those eyes were unutterably sad.

"You are absolutely a stranger to me," he said. "Beyond my own household, I have seen no fresh face for years. My excuse for calling upon you is that this house once belonged to my family. An aunt of mine died here, my grandfather died here—he committed suicide."

"Indeed!" Cheriton murmured politely.

"Yes, he threw himself out of the dormer window, at the top of the house. Within a year, two uncles of mine and an old family servant also committed suicide in a precisely

similar manner. I make no attempt to explain the strange matter—I merely state the fact."

"A most extraordinary thing," Cheriton replied.

"More than extraordinary. Do you know that I often dream of that dormer window in the night, and wake up with a strange longing to come here and throw myself out, as my relatives did before me? One night, in the Afghan passes near Kandahar, the impulse almost deprived me of reason for a time. Now you know why that window was bricked up."

Cheriton was profoundly impressed. He would have repudiated any suggestion of superstition, the hard enamel of a hard-ended century had long been forged over that kind of folly. Still, the fact remained. Only recently Cheriton had sold out of the Army and purchased Bernemore House, the scene of the tragedies mentioned by Sherlock. Of the evil reputation of the dormer window he had heard nothing. The fret of seventy years had rubbed the story from the village tablets.

It was a little disturbing, because for some time Cheriton had had his eye on that built-up dormer window. It was a double one and a fine bit of architecture.

Accommodation downstairs for the irresponsible bachelor was limited, and it seemed good to Cheriton to unseal the windows and make a luxurious smoking-lounge of the room originally lighted by them. This thing had been done, and only the previous evening the room had been greatly admired by such men as were even now staying in the house.

"Only yesterday I heard what you were doing," the General remarked, after a long pause. "Believe me, it is painful to drag myself thus from my solitude. But my duty lies plainly before me. To sit down quietly and allow things to take their course would be murder."

Sherlock's words thrilled with an absolute conviction. There was none of the conscious shame of a man who whispers of Fear in the cold ear of Courage.

"But, surely, General," Cheriton stam-

\* Copyright, 1902, by Ward, Lock and Co., in the United States of America.



mered, "you don't suppose that this family curse, or whatever it is, holds good with strangers?"

"Indeed I do, Captain Cheriton. Did I not tell you that a valued old servant of our family met his death in the same horrible way?"

"But his mind might have become unhinged. You are, of course, aware that suicide sometimes takes the nature of an epidemic. No sooner does a man destroy

I'm bound to confess to a strong desire to investigate this business further."

"Then you won't close that window again?"

"General, this is the beginning of the twentieth century!"

General Sherlock drew himself up as if shaking the burden of the years from his shoulders. He seemed to expand, his voice grew firm, the tiny pools in his eyes filled them with a liquid flame of anger.



"The same instant Scott had dived for it clean through the window."

himself in some novel way, than a score of people follow his example."

A little pool of light glittered in the General's eyes.

"You are an obstinate man, I see," he said.

"Well, I like to get to the bottom of things. To be perfectly candid, if I do what you suggest, I shall be laughed at. It is only a very brave man, or a very great fool, who is impervious to ridicule. And

"I see I must tell you the whole shameful story," he said. "My duty lies plainly before me, and I must follow it at any cost. My grandfather was an unmitigated scoundrel; he broke his wife's heart, he drove his daughter and his sons from him. There was also a story of a betrayed gipsy girl, and a curse—the same curse that was to fall on this house and those who dwelt there for all time—but I need not go into that. For years my grandfather lived here



alone, with an old drunken scoundrel of a servant to do his bidding; indeed, it was rarely that either of them was sober."

The General paused, but Cheriton made no response.

"Well, the time was near at hand when the tragedy was to come. It so happened, one winter evening, when the snow was on the ground and the air was cold, that a coaching accident happened hard by. It so happened also that one of the injured was the daughter of my grandfather, to whom I have already alluded. She was badly hurt, but she managed to crawl here for a night's lodging. It was quite dark when she arrived, dark and terribly cold. Ill and suffering as she was, my poor aunt was refused admission by that scoundrel; they thrust her out in their drunken fury, to perish if she pleased. She staggered a few yards into the courtyard, she lay down with her face to the stars and died. No words of mine could convey more than that.

"The room with the dormer window was my grandfather's den. It was late the following afternoon before he came from his debauched sleep; the setting sun was shining in the courtyard as he looked out. And there, with a smile upon her face, lay Mary Sherlock—dead.

"A cry rang through the house, the cry of a soul calling for mercy. Then, in a dull, mechanical way, the wretched man drew to the window, he flung back the leaded casement, and cast himself headlong to the ground. Then——"

The General paused, as if unable to proceed, and held out his hand.

"I can say no more," he remarked presently. "If I have not convinced you now, then indeed my efforts have been wasted. Good-bye. Whether or not I shall ever see you again rests entirely with yourself."

"I am not unmoved," Cheriton replied. "Good-bye, and thank you sincerely."

## II.

UNDER ordinary circumstances they were a cheerful lot at Bernemore. Cheriton was a capital host, he chose his company carefully, and Ida Cheriton, a wife of six months' standing, had charms both of wit and beauty.

She looked a little more dainty and fragile than usual, as she sat at the foot of the dinner-table; her grey eyes were introspective, for there was another joy coming to her out of the future, and it filled her with a soft

alarm. In her own absent fit she did not notice the absence of mind of her husband.

It was summer time, and no lights gleamed across the table, save the falling lances of sunshine playing on flowers and bloomy grapes. The air was heavy with the fragrance of peaches and new-mown clover.

There were perhaps a dozen people dining there altogether. Dixon and his wife, of Cheriton's old regiment; Michelmores the author and his bride, with a naval lieutenant named Acton, and Ida Cheriton's brother Charlie, a nervous, highly strung youth, with a marvellous record still making at Oxford.

"What's the matter with Cheriton?" Acton demanded, when the last swish of silk and muslin had died away. "Pass the cigarettes, Dixon. Out with it, Ralph."

"I dare say you fellows will laugh at me," Cheriton remarked sententiously.

"I dare say," Acton replied. "I laugh at most things. You don't mean that you have found a tame ghost or something of that kind."

"It isn't a ghost, it's a story that I heard to-day. I'm going to tell you the story, and then you can judge for yourselves."

Cheriton commenced in silence, and finished with the same complimentary stillness. On the whole, Acton was the least impressed.

"I am bound to confess that it sounds creepy enough," he remarked. "But a machine-made man can hardly be expected to swallow this kind of thing without a protest. I'll bet you on one thing—no unseen hand could ever lure *me* to chuck myself out of that window."

"I wouldn't be sure of that, Acton," Michelmores said gravely.

"Ah! you're a novelist, you have a profound imagination. A pony I sleep in that room to-night, and beat you a hundred up at billiards before breakfast to-morrow."

No response was made to this liberal offer, for latter-day convention in not usually shaken off, influenced by neat claret imbibed under circumstances calculated to cheer. Only Cheriton looked troubled. "Well, somebody's got to knock the bottom out of this nonsense," Acton protested. "General Sherlock has done some big things in his days, but he's eighty years of age. Let us go up to the smoking-room and investigate. There's a good hour or more of daylight yet, and we may find something."

With a certain contempt for his own weakness, Cheriton complied. Once in the room, he could see nothing to foster or



encourage fear. The apartment was furnished as a Moorish divan; it was bright and cheerful. From the dormer window a charming view of the country was obtained. Acton threw the casements back and looked out. His keen, sunburnt face was lighted by a dry smile.

"Well, how do you feel?" asked Dixon.

"Pretty well, thank you," Acton laughed. "I have no impulses, nor do I yearn to throw myself down, not a cent's worth. Come and try, Charlie."

Charlie Scott drew back and shivered. Cheriton's story had appealed vividly to his sensitive, highly strung nature.

"Call me a coward if you like," he said, "but I couldn't lean out of that window as you are doing, for all Golconda. I could kick myself for my weakness, but it is there all the same."

Acton dropped into a comfortable lounge with a smile of contempt. Scott flushed as he saw this, and timidly suggested that the windows should be closed. With a foot high in the air, Acton protested vigorously.

"No, no," he cried. "Believe what you please, but do not pander to this nonsense. If you *should* feel like doing the Curtius business, give us a call, and we'll sit on your head, Charlie. But in the name of common sense leave the windows open."

A murmur of approval followed. The line had to be drawn somewhere. As yet no note of tragedy dominated the conversation. Acton and Dixon were deep in the discussion of forthcoming Ascot, and Cheriton joined fitfully in their conversation. Only Michelmores and Scott were silent. The novelist was studying the sensitive face of his young companion, a face white and uneasy, lighted by eyes that gleamed like liquid fire. His glance was drawn to the open window, he sat gazing in that direction with a gaze that never moved.

Then, in a dazed kind of way, he rose and took a step forward. His eyes were glazed and fixed in horror and repugnance. He looked like a man going to the commission of some vile crime against which his whole soul rebelled. Michelmores watched him with the subtle analysis of his tribe.

For the moment Cheriton seemed to have thrown off the weight from his shoulders. He was lying back in a big arm-chair and discussing the prospects of certain horses. And he was just faintly ashamed of himself.

But Michelmores's quiet, ruminative eyes were everywhere. He was watching Scott with the zest of an expert in the dissecting

of emotions, but ready in a moment to restrain the other should he go too far.

It was a thrilling moment for the novelist, at any rate. He saw Scott creeping gently like a cat to the window, groping with his hands as he went, like one who is blind or in the dark. The horror of a great loathing was in his eyes, yet he went on, and on, steadily.

Michelmores stretched out a hand and detained Scott as he passed. At the touch of live, palpitating human fingers he pulled up suddenly, as if he had just received an electric shock.

"Where are you going to?" Michelmores asked in a thin, grating voice.

"I was going to throw myself out of that window," he said.

"Oh! So Cheriton's story had all that effect upon you. Take my advice, and chuck your books for the present. You are in a bad way."

"I'm nothing of the kind, Michelmores. I'm as sound in mind and body as you are. Even if I had never heard that story, the same impulse would have come over me on entering this room. You'll feel it sooner or later, and so will the rest of them. The impulse has passed now, but after to-night you do not catch me in here again."

Michelmores did not laugh, for the simple reason that he knew Scott to be speaking from sheer conviction. His was no mind diseased. It was impossible to note that clear skin and clear eye, and doubt that. Michelmores stepped across the room to answer some question of Acton's, and for the moment Scott was forgotten. When the novelist turned again, a cry of horror broke from him.

He saw Scott rise to his feet as if some unseen force had jerked him; he saw the victim of this nameless horror cross like a flash to the window. Then he darted forward and made a wild clutch for Scott's arm. At the same instant Scott had dived for it clean through the window. There was a vision like an empty sack fluttering from a warehouse shoot, and then a dull, hideous, sickening smash below.

Though the whole room took in the incident like a flash, nobody moved for a moment. Who does not know the jar and the snap of a broken limb, the sense of all that is to follow, and the void of pain for the merciful fraction of a merciful second? And then——

And then every man was on his feet. They clattered, heedless of necks, down the stairs, all save Acton, who crossed to the





"Cheriton sawed through the cords with a pocket-knife."

window. He saw a heap of black and white grotesquely twisted on the stones, he saw a slim white figure in satin staring down at a bruised face no whiter than her own.

"God help her!" Acton sobbed. "It's Mrs. Cheriton."

It was. She stood motionless like a statue until the men reached the courtyard. Scott had fallen at her very feet as she was passing

into the garden; a single spot of blood glistened on her white gown. She made no sound, though her face twitched and the muscles about her mouth vibrated like harp-strings. Cheriton laid a shaking hand on his wife's shoulder.

"You must come out of this at once," he said hoarsely.

But the fascinating horror of the thing still held Ida Cheriton to the spot. If she could only scream, or faint, or cry—anything but that grey torpor and the horrible twitching of the muscles!

Not until the limp form of Scott was raised from the flags did sound come from Ida's lips. Then she laughed, a laugh low down in her throat, and gradually rising, till the air rang with the screaming inhuman mirth. Cheriton caught Ida in his arms and carried her into the house. The curse of Cain seemed to have fallen upon him. It was he and he alone who had brought about this nameless thing. With a sense of agony and shame, he averted his eyes from those of his wife. But he need not have done so, for Ida had fainted dead away upon his shoulder.

Meanwhile, they had laid Scott out upon a bed brought hurriedly down into the hall. He still breathed; a moan and a shudder came from him ever and again. The horror of his face was caused by something more than pain. Then Cheriton came headlong in.

"Can I do anything!" Acton whispered.

"Yes, yes!" Cheriton cried. "For the love of Heaven go for the doctor! Ride in to Castleford, and bring the first man you can find. Go quickly, for my wife is dying!"

### III.

SCOTT was not dead. The fall had been severe and the injury great, but the un-



fortunate man still lingered. It was nearly midnight before an anxious, haggard doctor came downstairs.

Cheriton was waiting there. For the last two hours he had been pacing up and down the polished oak floor chewing the cud of a restless, blistering agony.

"My wife!" he gasped, "she is——?"

"Asleep," Dr. Morrison replied. "She is likely to remain asleep for some hours. To be candid, Mrs. Cheriton is under the influence of a strong narcotic. There was no other way of preserving her reason."

"She has not suffered in—otherwise? You know what I mean. Morrison, if anything like that has happened, I shall destroy myself!"

The man of medicine laid a soothing hand upon the speaker's arm. He noted the white, haggard face and the restless eyes.

"You would be none the worse for a tonic yourself," he said. "Mrs. Cheriton is suffering from a great shock. Apart from brain mischief, I apprehend no serious results. What we want to do for the present is to keep that brain dormant. In any case, it will be some weeks before Mrs. Cheriton is herself again. You must be prepared to find her mind temporarily unhinged."

Cheriton swallowed a groan. Then he asked after Scott.

"No hope there, I suppose?" he said.

"Well, yes, strange as it may seem. There is concussion of the brain and a fractured thigh, but I can detect no internal injuries. I can do no more to-night."

Ida Cheriton was sleeping peacefully. There was no sign on her face of the terrible shock she had so lately sustained. She breathed lightly as a little child. As Cheriton entered, Mrs. Michelmores rose out of the shadow beyond the pool of light cast from a shaded candle.

"I am going to stay here till morning," she said.

Cheriton protested feebly. But he was too worn and spent to contend the point. The last two hours seemed to have aged him terribly. The crushing weight of terror held him down and throttled him. General Sherlock's face rose up before him like an avenging shadow. A wild longing to fly from the house and its nameless horror came over him.

Quivering and fluttering in every limb, Cheriton crept downstairs again. A solitary lamp burned in the hall, the house had grown still and quiet. Acton sat in the shadow, smoking a cigarette.

"I have been waiting for you," he said. "The others have gone to bed. It seemed to them that they would be best out of the way, only, of course, they earnestly desire to be called if their services are required."

"Hadn't you better follow their example?" Cheriton asked.

"What are you going to do, then?" Acton suggested. "My dear fellow, I simply couldn't go to bed to-night. Not that I am impressed by this horrible business quite in the same way as yourself—I mean as to its occult side. It's a ghastly coincidence, all the same."

"It may be," Cheriton said wearily. "Heaven only knows!"

With a heavy sigh he rose from his place and crossed the hall. A deadly faintness came upon him, he staggered almost to his fall. His eyes closed, his head fell upon his breast—a strange desire to sleep came over him.

"I'll lie here and close my eyes for a bit," he said.

In a long deck-chair Acton made his friend comfortable. Exhausted Nature asserted herself at length, and Cheriton slept. A minute or two later and the sound of his laboured breathing filled the hall.

"He'll not move for hours," Acton muttered. "Now's my chance."

He moved away quietly, but with resolution. The level-headed sailor, with his logical, mathematical mind, a mind that must have a formula for everything, was by no means satisfied. He would get to the bottom of this thing. If he could do nothing else, he would rob the situation of its unseen terrors.

Without the slightest feeling of excitement, and with nerves that beat as steadily as his own ship's engines, he proceeded to his room. From thence he took a fine hempen rope, and, with this in his hand, proceeded to creep along till he came to the chamber of the dormer window.

Quite coolly he passed in and closed the door behind him. He switched on the electric light and opened the windows wide. Then, with a smile of contempt for his concession to popular prejudices, he proceeded to scientifically arrange the rope he had brought with him. An hour passed, two hours passed, and then Acton rose laggardly to his feet. His face had grown set and pale, his eyes were fixed upon the open window.

\* \* \* \* \*

Meanwhile, Cheriton had been sleeping like a man overcome with wine. An hour or more passed away before the nature of his





"With a force that surprised Cheriton she pulled at his arms."



slumber changed. Then he began to dream horribly—awful dreams of falling through space and being drawn down steep places by evil eyes and mocking spirits.

Then somebody cried out, and Cheriton came to his consciousness. His heart was beating like a steam hammer, a profuse sweat ran down his face. All the dread weight of trouble fell upon him again.

"I could have sworn I heard somebody call," he said.

He listened intently, quivering from head to foot like a dog scenting danger. It was no fancy, for again the cry was repeated. In the stillness of the night Cheriton could locate the direction easily. It came from outside the house. From one painted window a long lance of moonlight glistened on the polished floor. Outside it was light as day.

With trembling hands Cheriton drew the bolts and plunged into the garden.

"Who called?" he asked. "Where are you?"

"Round here, opposite the courtyard," came a faint voice, which Cheriton had no difficulty in recognising as that of Acton. "Bring a ladder quickly, for I am pretty well done for. Thank goodness somebody heard me!"

Cheriton found a short ladder after some little search, and with it on his shoulders made his way round to the courtyard upon which the dormer window gave. At this very spot the tragedy had taken place.

"Get the ladder up quickly!" Acton gasped.

Cheriton complied as swiftly as his astonishment permitted. Acton was suspended some fifteen feet from the ground by a rope firmly tied about his body. He was hanging head downwards, and making feeble efforts to right himself and get a good hand-purchase on the rope. As the ladder was reared he contrived to get a grip and a foothold. He panted and gasped like a man who has been forced under water till his strength is exhausted.

"In the name of Fortune," asked Cheriton, "what does it mean?"

"Get me free first," Acton gurgled. "This rope is sawing me in two. You shall know all about it presently. Just for the moment I would pledge my soul for a glass of brandy and soda-water."

Cheriton sawed through the cords with a pocket-knife, and then helped the limp figure of Acton to the ground. A minute or two later, and the latter was reclining on a chair, with a full tumbler clinking against his teeth.

The colour filtered into his cheeks presently, his hand grew steady.

"I wouldn't go through the last half-hour again for a flagship," he explained. "After you had gone to sleep, I made up my mind to test the dormer window business for myself. So as to be absolutely on the safe side, I fastened the end of a coil of rope to the stone pillar inside the window frame, and the other end I made fast round my own waist. Then I lighted a cigarette and waited.

"It was perhaps an hour before I experienced any sensation. Then I found that I could not keep my eyes from that window. I abandoned the struggle to do so, and then I had a mind-picture of myself lying dead on the stones below. I could see every hurt and wound distinctly. A violent fit of trembling came over me, and I was conscious of a deep feeling of depression. My mind was permeated with the idea that I had committed some awful crime. I was shunned by everybody about me. The only way out of the thing was to take my own life. Then I rose and made my way to the window.

"I give you my word of honour, Cheriton, I struggled against that impulse until I was as weak and feeble as a little child. I had entirely forgotten that I was protected from damage by the rope. If I had remembered, I should have most certainly been compelled to remove it, and by this time I should be lying dead and mangled in the courtyard. I would not go through it all again for the Bank of England. The horror is indescribable.

"Well, I fought till I could fight no longer. With a wild cry I closed my eyes and made a headlong dash for the window. I flung myself out. I fell until the cord about my waist checked me and nearly dislocated every limb. Then came the strangest part of this strange affair. Once I was clear of that infernal room, the brooding depression passed from me, and my desire was to save my life, to struggle for it to the end. I was myself again, with nerves as strong and steady as ever, and nothing troubling me beyond the weakness engendered by my efforts to get free. I was forced to cry for help at last, and fortunately you heard my call. And I'm not going to doubt any more. For Heaven's sake have that window blocked up without delay!"

Cheriton turned his grey face to the light.

"I will," he said. "It shall be done as soon as possible. How faithfully General Sherlock's prophecy has been verified I know to my sorrow."



## IV.

SCOTT would recover. There was an infinite consolation in the doctor's fiat, which he gave two days later. His recovery would of necessity be painfully slow, for the injuries were many and deep-rooted. But youth and a good constitution, in the absence of internal injuries, would do much.

As yet Scott was unconscious. Nor was the condition of Ida Cheriton very much better. It had been deemed prudent to tell her the good news so far as Scott was concerned, but it seemed to convey very little impression.

For, sooth to say, the patient was not progressing as well as she might. She did not seem to be able to shake off the strange mistiness that clouded her intellect, she could only remember the horror she had seen. Charlie was dead, and she had watched him come headlong to his destruction. During her waking hours she lay still and numb, the horror still in her eyes.

"It isn't madness?" Cheriton asked hoarsely.

"No," Morrison replied. "I should say not. The shock has caused the brain to cease working for a time. Personally, I should prefer delirium. I can only pursue my present course of treatment. When the trembling fits come on, the drug will have to be administered as ordered. I will take care that you have plenty of it in the house."

There was no more to be said, no more to be done, only to wait and hope. One or two drear, miserable days dragged their weary length along. The house was devoid of guests by this time; it was better thus, with two patients there fighting for health and reason, and the whole place was under the sway of two clear-eyed nurses whose word was law.

As yet no steps had been taken to have an end put to the cause of all the mischief. Under the circumstances that was impossible. Anything in the way of noise would have been sternly interdicted, and it was out of the question to dispense with din and clamour with masons and bricklayers about. Not that there was any danger, for everybody shunned the haunted room like the plague. Not a servant would have entered it for untold gold.

A great stillness lay over the house, for it was night again. Downstairs, in the dining-room, Cheriton dined alone, and smoked gloomily afterwards. The soothing influence of tobacco was one of the few consolations

he possessed. He rose for another cigarette, but his cupboard was empty.

In the trouble and turmoil of the last few days the all-important tobacco question had been forgotten. It seemed to Cheriton that he had never thirsted for a cigarette as he did at this moment. He positively ached for it.

Then he recollected. On the night of the tragedy they had all been smoking in the room with the dormer window. There were a couple of boxes up there, both of them practically intact. To get them would be an easy matter.

Cheriton hesitated but a moment, then he passed up the stairs. As he opened the door of the haunted chamber and turned up the light, he saw the window was open, for nobody had entered since the adventure of Acton there. Cheriton grabbed the boxes of cigarettes and turned to leave the room.

As he did so he glanced involuntarily at the open window. He shuddered and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, he found, to his surprise and horror, that he was some feet closer to the window than before. A cold perspiration chilled him to the bone, he tried to move and tried in vain.

When he did move, it was to advance still nearer to the window. Suddenly there came over him a wave of depression, the same feeling of dull despair so graphically described by Acton. It drew him on and on.

"Great Heaven!" he groaned, "I am lost! My poor wife!"

Then a strange thing happened. A light foot was heard coming up the stairs. A moment later and Ida stood in the corridor in full view of her husband. She made a sweet and thrilling picture, in her white, clinging gown covered with foamy lace; her shining hair hung over a pair of ivory shoulders.

"Ralph," she said, and her voice was low and sweet, "I want you."

She had risen from her bed in the temporary absence of her nurse. Something in her clouded brain bade her seek for her husband. In a dim fashion she saw him, knew that he stood before her.

She advanced with a tender half-smile. A sudden ray of hope jostled and almost released Cheriton's frozen limbs. Then he saw that the danger was likely to be doubled, the peril hers as well as his.

"Do not come any further," he cried. "Do not, I implore you!"

Ida paused, half irresolute. What was Ralph doing there, and why did he look at



her with that face of terror? Then the cloud rolled back from her brain for a moment. It was from that fatal room that Charlie had gone to his death. A quivering little cry escaped her.

"Come to me!" she implored. "Come to me, Ralph. Why are you in that awful place? If you do not come, I must come to you."

She advanced with hands outstretched and eyes full of entreaty. And Cheriton made an effort that turned him faint and dazy. Once Ida entered that room, he knew only too well that nothing could save the pair of them. But he could not move, he could only wave Ida back and speak with dumb lips.

She came on, and on, until her hands lay on his. With a force that surprised Cheriton she pulled at his arms. There was no longer the light of madness in her eyes, but a desire to save him fighting the terror that overcame her. The slim, white figure had a strength almost divine.

"For my sake!" she cried. "Come, come, come!"

As her voice rose higher and higher, some of her strength seemed to pass into Cheriton. He no longer looked to the window. He raised one foot and put it down a good yard nearer the door. With a last mighty effort, and an effort that turned him sick and dizzy, and strained his heart to bursting point, he gathered Ida in his arms and cleared the

space to the door with a spring. The lock was snapped, then the key went whizzing through a window into a thicket of shrubs, where it was found many days after.

Cheriton dropped in the corridor, and there he lay unconscious for a time. When he came to himself again, Ida was bending over him. Her sweet eyes were filled with tears, but in those eyes swam the light of reason. "Don't speak, dear," Ida said tenderly. "I know everything now. I heard them talking as behind a veil when I lay there, but now I understand. Ralph, did you not tell me that Charlie would live?"

"The doctor said so, darling. Ida, you have saved my life."

"Yes, and I fancy I have saved my reason at the same time. Take me back to my room, please; I am so tired, so tired."

Ida closed her eyes and slept again. But it was the dreamless sleep of the child, the nurse said with a smile, and there would be no more anxiety now. All the same, Mr. Cheriton must go away at once. As to his wife, it was a mere matter of time; Nature would do the rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

People who know the story of the dormer window are many, but of all those who speak with authority not one can explain what lies beyond the veil.



CAPTIVES OF THE CAMERA.

*A photographic study by Charles Reid, Wishaw.*



# UNSOLVED.

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

## No. I.—THE CLASH OF DISHES.

WE were living, a large and pleasant company, in a shooting-lodge at the head of a Highland glen, and conversation had turned one evening after dinner on the supernatural, and every man—for the women would not commit themselves—had declared with the slightest flavour of ostentation that he did not believe any nonsense of that kind. Conversation drifted away to the sport of the day, to the prospects of to-morrow, to a picnic at a certain romantic spot where the women were to join us, and to every kind of gossip. When the men had gathered in the smoking-room, which was panelled in black oak and lay largely in the shadow, and the circle round the fire had lit their favourite pipes and stretched out their legs with the satisfaction of men who have done a hard day's work and now are at ease, someone turned back on the talk in the drawing-room. It was, in fact, the minister of the Glen, who often stayed in that lodge between Sundays, and who, being a Highlander and still a lad in years, was touched with the romance of superstition, and would have gone then—as, indeed, an old man now, he would still go—twenty miles to hear a ghost story. He had the idea that every man has at least one experience in his life, and he may have more than one, which he cannot explain on natural grounds and which therefore remains unsolved. When he put forward this view as a mere suggestion, and carelessly struck a match as if the subject were of no importance, a writing man murmured, as he watched the smoke go up to the ceiling, that he rather thought there was something in it, and a veteran from the Indian frontier looked at the lighted end of his cheroot and declared he half believed it. Then the minister, in his eager, boyish fashion, younger by far than any man present, made a proposal with fear and trembling. The company would be in that lodge unbroken for over fourteen days, which meant fourteen nights in the smoking-

room, and it might be a wet day or two in the gun-room; and men, to say nothing of women—if, indeed, women should have part or lot in such a matter—could not talk for ever about grouse. Why should not each man describe—for the passing of the time, simply that—anything which had happened to him and which he could not trace to its cause? And each man was to tell his tale upon the understanding that it was not to be taken for granted that he believed in the foolishness of ghosts; that he was not to adorn the tale with any picturesque circumstances for the amusement of his auditors; that he was at the same time to let us know what he had been doing before this thing happened, and what he had been thinking about, and not to hide anything which might indirectly account for the impression produced upon him; and, lastly, that we were not to worry ourselves with arguing about the solution, but simply accept the tale as the account of something which the narrator believed had taken place, and which he had described exactly as it seemed to him. And as the minister had started the idea, it was insisted he should lead the way; so he told them what had befallen him one night last winter—not because it was the only unexplained incident in his life, for he was a Highlander, but because it was the latest.

"The date," began the minister, "was a Saturday in December, and I had been visiting a sick case five miles from the Manse. I left the farm about three o'clock in the afternoon, and the darkness had fallen when I was a mile from home. There was also a slight mist, making it impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. As I was coming along the high road between trees, and where it was rather darker than usual, I heard someone running, apparently through the fields, and at right angles to me, and from the increasing sound I concluded he was approaching me. In ordinary circumstances I would not have thought much about the matter, for there is no danger to anyone by night or day in the Glen, and a highwayman would be incredible.

\* Copyright, 1902, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



But the police at our county town had recently warned us that some dangerous criminals, who had committed a burglary with violence, were hiding in Perthshire, and that there was some reason to believe that they had taken work as unskilled labourers in our slate-quarries up on the hillside. Our solitary police-constable was told to keep an eye on any strangers, and if he could get sufficient evidence, to make an arrest, and for the first time in the memory of living man we had been snibbing our windows and locking our doors. A man running across a field as if to intercept one therefore suggested danger, and I stopped and turned in the direction from which he was coming. There was a hedge at the side of the road rising out of a slight bank, and over that hedge the man would have to climb. In less than a minute he was on the other side of the hedge, whoever he might be, and I saw his figure for the first time when he leapt on to the bank. A tall, strongly built man was all I can say about him; his face in the darkness and at the distance of some six yards I could not identify. Standing on the height, he threw up both arms as a man would do to stop a train, and cried in a low, clear voice: 'Halt!' and I thought he was about to leap down; but he remained with his arms still raised on the other side of the hedge, a weird figure, half veiled in the darkness, yet faintly outlined by a faint light.

"'Who are you, and what do you want?'" I replied, facing him from the road. 'I am the minister.'

"'The minister,' he said, with the same penetrating voice, 'the minister.' Then his arms fell, he jumped backwards, and began to run away as rapidly as he had come, and in a minute or two the sound of his footsteps had ceased and everything was again silent.

"On Monday I visited the farm to which the field belonged, and whose house was the only one near the spot, and I cautiously questioned them whether any stranger had come to their door or passed in their hearing on Saturday evening. They had seen no one and heard nothing, and I discovered that it could not have been any person belonging to their own household. So the man who ran across the field and stood upon the bank was not accounted for. But of course I am not suggesting that there was anything supernatural about him or his coming. Whoever he was, or whatever he wanted, he was a living man, and I only mention the incident because it may have

shaken my nerves, and because it will help you to understand why I anticipated something might happen that night. When I arrived at the little village, and before going to the Manse, I called at the constable's and asked him whether there were any news about our suspects. He said that he was only waiting till Monday, when he believed the men would come down to the village in the evening for their stores, to arrest two men who he was convinced were the fugitives, and on that occasion he would require the aid of some of the young fellows, as he expected a fierce resistance. I asked him whether they had done any mischief in the Glen, or whether there had been any complaint. He said that he had heard of nothing, and that he was not afraid of their doing any injury, because that would be simply giving themselves away, and would lead to instant capture, which seemed a very reasonable view, but it left my running man a somewhat eerie mystery. They were arrested on the Monday evening as they were leaving our public-house, and resisted so fiercely that the constable required the aid of four of our young fellows before they were bound hand and foot and placed in a cart to be taken down to Muirtown. I was present at the arrest, but could not identify either as the man of Saturday, nor could I recognise the voice.

"It seemed to me best to say nothing to my housekeeper about the bad characters who were supposed to be in the district, because in my absence she had to live alone in the Manse, and although the nearest house was only the space of a garden away, there was a high wall between, and the only communication was through our grounds and round by the church. We were practically without neighbours, and that evening, as I came in beneath the trees whose leafless branches touched the porch of the church, and by the side of a high fir hedge, and along the garden walk, I may confess that I looked round more than once in the darkness, half expecting to see a figure in the shadow and to be again summoned to halt. As I am accustomed to be on the road and to cross the moor and to come through our woods at every hour both of the day and night, you must not think me a timid townsman, or one to be thrown into a panic at the incidents of country life—say, when an owl hoots close beside you; or a bird rises at your foot on the hill; or the shape of a Highland cattle beast looms suddenly out of the darkness; or, as happened one night,



a keeper springs out of a ditch and demands your name, thinking that at last he has caught one of our clever poachers. A new sense of danger had taken hold of my imagination. I realised how lonely the Manse was, and how many hiding-places there were among the trees and bushes of its garden. When I stood on the doorstep, I was conscious of looking round to see if I had been followed; and when I found myself beside the lamp in the little hall, and knew that the door was between me and anyone among the trees, I had for the first time in my life a sense of relief from physical fear. It struck me at dinner that my housekeeper was fidgeting with the dishes and seemed ill at ease. After a little she asked me whether I had heard that some burglars were hiding at the slate-quarries, and that the Glen had been warned to take care of their houses. I said that I had been told something of the kind, but made light of the warning, only I added that it might be as well to see that the doors were locked and the windows latched; but I rather laughed at the whole affair, pointing out that there was very little worth stealing in a manse, and that we ourselves would be rather difficult to carry away. As I had been engaged that Saturday in visitation, my sermon was not yet written (for young ministers are always behind with their work, changing and rechanging to the last hour), and after dinner I sat down for a few hours' work at my writing-table in the study. This would be between eight and nine o'clock, and here again I think it fair to point out that before the thing happened, whatever it was, I had four hours' hard brain work, which, as you may take it, either proves that I was in a perfectly alert and self-possessed state of mind, or, on the other hand, that I was overwrought and excited.

"About ten o'clock the housekeeper brought in a glass of milk, which I was accustomed to take before going to bed, and she asked me whether I wished that she should, as usual, take my black-and-tan terrier, who spent the evening with me in the study, out to the stable, where he slept with the big retriever. 'Where else,' I asked, 'was he to go?' and then she hinted in a roundabout way that I might like to have him with me in the house. He was the gamest dog I ever had, and would face up to any beast or any person, and I knew that he could put the fear of death on tramps and such-like in a way which had often cheered my housekeeper's heart. So I rather chaffed her

upon being afraid of the burglars and wishing to have him in her own room; but I was concerned to notice that, although she was one of the coolest women I ever saw, and used to remain cheerfully alone in the Manse a fortnight on end when I was on holiday, she was shaken and seemed to have an apprehension of something going to happen. I was not particularly anxious to go out to the stable myself, but it was better that I should go than that she should be scared, so I took Jack out; but instead of going by the front door and round by the garden, I went through the kitchen and out at the back door. I left the kitchen door open, and crossing to the stable I kept an eye upon it, for (I am telling everything to show one's state of mind) it occurred to me that if a man were hiding near by, he might go in when my back was turned and hide somewhere in the house. As soon as Jack was in the stable and I had heard the retriever give him a warm welcome, I went into the house without sauntering through the garden as on another night I might have done, for even in winter a turn in the garden with your pipe is a good preparation for bed. When I came in, I locked and bolted the kitchen door, and then I went through the house, fastening all the windows and seeing that the house was really empty, except for the housekeeper, who had now gone to her room, and myself. Then I returned to the study and began to work again upon a sermon which was rather refractory. This would be about half past ten, and by eleven o'clock I was immersed in my subject.

"Perhaps I had better explain at this point the geography of the Manse, in order that you may understand how I heard what I heard, and how I went where I went. The study was on the right hand of the front door as one entered, and the dining-room on the left, with a passage between from which the staircase started for the upper floor. At the end of this passage there was a door, a little further on another door, which two doors shut off the kitchen premises from the rest of the house; and these premises consist of a kitchen directly behind the study, behind the dining-room a large pantry, and then beyond the kitchen a scullery, with a servant's bedroom opening out of the scullery. This room has a window looking on the garden, and a fixed bed; but as it is a dreary, damp little hole, my housekeeper uses one of the four bedrooms upstairs which complete, with a number of cupboards, the





“‘Who are you, and what do you want?’”



accommodation—for the Manse is a bachelor's house. Between the study and the kitchen where it happened, there was, therefore, only an inner wall—but it was, according to the fashion of building in the Glen, very substantial—and sitting by my study fire, I could not hear any sound in the kitchen unless it were something quite abnormal. Twelve o'clock rang out on a grandfather's clock in the passage just when I was writing the last words of the sermon, and I reckoned that it would take me half an hour to correct, and then I might go to bed with a clear conscience. A little later there was a sound as if someone were tapping on the study window opposite where I was sitting, and I laid down my pen and looked at the back of the shutters—for I forgot to mention that, for the first time, I had that night closed all the shutters on the lower floor. Yet through the shutter came distinctly the sound of something, sometimes scratching the glass, and sometimes flipping it. I went over to the shutter and heard the sound at intervals still more clearly, and then considered whether I should put out the lamp and open the shutter, or whether I should go quietly out through the front door and come upon—well, whatever was doing this, from the outside. Then it came to me what a fool I was, for a branch of the rose tree which covered the south wall of the study was hanging loose, and when the wind was in a certain quarter flapped upon the window. I mention this alarm, as I have told about the burglars, simply to show that I was nervous and expectant, and when I walked over to the fireplace to get some tobacco, the hand of the little clock on the mantelpiece stood at 12.20. I lit my pipe and was turning over the concluding passage in my sermon, before going to correct it at the table, when I heard the sound, and now I have come to what did happen. And one thing is perfectly certain: standing on the hearthrug and considering how I should shape my last sentence (a young minister is much concerned about such things), I was absolutely awake and in possession of my faculties.

“What I heard in an instant and in the stillness of the house was a sound which can be distinguished from every other, and can, as far as natural causes go, be created only by one means. It was a loud and ringing clash, which occurred once and then was followed by silence. I took the pipe out of my mouth and stood at attention. Everything was quiet, so that I could hear

the ticking of the clock in the lobby and a mouse squeaking behind the skirting-board. As regards the explanation of the sound, I had not the slightest doubt; I knew, as I then supposed, what had made it and who had caused it. It could only have come from the fall of one or more pieces of metal, and from the quarter of the sound, as well as from the fact that that was the only place where there was such metal, they had fallen upon the kitchen floor. Either a number of tin dish-covers had been thrown off from the wall and descended on the stone flags, or else—and this was what I thought more likely (for my mind was working with much rapidity and I was laying out the scene)—a large meat-jack—for such things were a portion of kitchen equipment in the 'seventies—had been knocked over with violence. Nor had I the slightest doubt who had done this, and how he had come to do it. The warning of the county police had not been a mere scare, and the poverty of the Manse had not been an absolute security. Our burglary had come, and we were going to have an adventure. They had opened the kitchen window—which could easily be done, for it was level with the garden—had turned back the shutters, and then one of them had climbed into the kitchen, but had done so in such a careless fashion that he had either jerked off some dish-covers from the wall near the window—which was, however, unlikely—or had upset the meat-jack, which, being much in use, stood close to the window; and I took for granted that this was really what had been done. On the other side of the wall, a few feet from me, were the burglars.

“Standing still upon the hearthrug—and with only this difference of attitude: I turned my back on the fire and faced the door—I considered the plan of campaign. Should I go out by the front door and round to the village to secure the help of the constable and some of the men, in which case, if we were quick, we might take the burglars in the rear and capture them gloriously? Or should I face them myself and trust to good luck, not for their capture, which would be impossible with one man against two—for I took for granted there would be two—but for their hurried retreat, in which case I should then rouse the village, and if we did not capture them that night, they would be taken in the morning. I decided against the former plan, because the front door could not be opened without a jarring noise that rang through the house; because they would almost certainly leave one outside at





"The meat-jack stood  
as erect as ever."

the window, and he would almost as certainly hear my footsteps in the garden; and also because I did not like the idea of leaving the housekeeper even for a few minutes with those ruffians, lest she should come downstairs and fall into their hands. It seemed necessary that I should deal with the burglars myself, and I wished that moment that I possessed a revolver, although—and I mention this to show that I was not over-excited—I thought it very likely the revolver would be as dangerous to myself as to the burglars. Yet I judged that it certainly would have impressed them, and I resolved to purchase one on my first visit to Muirtown. As I had none that night, I decided to take the biggest stick in the lobby as I passed, and

this was my plan of campaign: To put out my study lamp, so that its light might not shine into the lobby and place me at a disadvantage if I had to retreat that way; to open the study door as quietly as possible, and to go down the darkness of the lobby on tip-toe; and then to open the two doors between the lobby and the kitchen with as much commotion as I could make; so that when I rushed, not at too great a pace, into the kitchen, I should find one of the burglars outside, and the other making his way through the win-

dow, and perhaps giving me an opportunity of identification.

"While my hand was on the handle of the study door and I was gently turning the lock—for I was great in the idea of not scaring them till I was almost upon them—the clash was repeated, and this time seemed to ring through the house, dirling and reverberating as if not one but half-a-dozen meat-jacks had been dashed upon the floor. The invaders had stood still for a minute or two—so I argued—and then, blundering about the kitchen, they had swept down the covers upon the meat-jack. Perhaps one of themselves had fallen, to complete the catastrophe, and now, with such a noise about their ears, even professional burglars would be panic-stricken. It struck me even at that moment, however, that skilful craftsmen would not be likely to play the fool with clashing cymbals after this fashion, and that if these were the men, they must be hopelessly drunk. Everything was quite still again as I tip-toed down the passage, but as I stood opposite the first door I was conscious of a certain dread for which the burglars did not account. There was not the slightest sound from the kitchen, no whispering, no shuffling, no moving of anything. I was conscious of an almost



irresistible desire to leave the whole matter alone, to rush upstairs and lock myself in my bedroom. For what? Because a couple of rascals had broken into the kitchen and were trapesing among the tin dishes. I pulled myself together, tore the first door open, shouted 'Who's there?' wrenched the second open, and burst into the kitchen—to find it in perfect order and empty of any human being!

"The fire was still burning and casting its light through the kitchen. Standing in the doorway and looking round, I saw at a glance that the shutters were untouched, that the dish-covers were in their places, that the meat-jack stood as erect as ever. The doors into the scullery and pantry were closed, everything was in perfect order. Was it possible that the burglars, after the second alarm, had in the space of a minute or so put everything right, gone out through the window, and drawn the shutters after them? I walked over to the window, discovered that the little bolt was in its place, and also—what I had not noticed before—that a small plant was standing on the ledge of the window. If it had been possible for skilful workmen at their trade to re-bolt the shutters from the outside, which would certainly have been a feat of dexterity, not even an Indian juggler could have placed a flower-pot close up to the shutters where the halves met. No one had come through the window, and therefore no burglar was likely to have thrown down the meat-jack. But perhaps I had assumed too hastily that they had entered through the kitchen window; they may have been able to squeeze themselves through the smaller windows of the other rooms, and they might now be either in the scullery or the pantry. I lit the candle, and was conscious as I did so of keeping a watchful eye on the closed doors; and then I explored the pantry. Nobody there; and the window—which, by the way, had a perforated zinc covering—was absolutely intact. If they were anywhere, they must be in the scullery or in the servant's bedroom; and when I entered these recesses, I felt a chill at my heart which I do not think was due to fear of any man, for by this time I was beginning to despise the burglars, or perhaps really to doubt their existence. The scullery was empty; and then I opened the door of the bedroom, and shivered—not, I want to say at once, on account of anything I saw, for the whole contents of the little room were the wooden framework of the bed and a couple of empty

boxes which had been stowed away there to utilise the space. The window was not only closed, but was protected within by a spider's web, and although I believe history has shown in a romantic case that this does not prove no one had gone that way a short while before, it was sufficient evidence for my purpose. Whatever had caused the clash, it was not burglars; and if so, what was it?

"Standing in the room, I was conscious of a feeling which I may describe as a mixture of curiosity and dread. Without any reason to go upon, and without, indeed, reasoning about the matter at all, I appeared to have felt, as by an instinct, that if any solution of the clash could be found, it would be in that bedroom. Why, I did not know then and do not know now. Holding up the candle, I examined the walls, which were unpapered and streaked with damp; the bed, whose woodwork was beginning to decay; the floor, which was of earth, with a strip of planking in front of the bed. There was certainly nothing mysterious and nothing hidden in that room, and yet I felt in my heart that I would rather have met twenty burglars than slept in it for a night. While I was examining the room again, I heard a sound, and immediately blew out my candle, for it was a stealthy footstep in the kitchen. After all, I had been outwitted, for I had forgotten that there was a door out of the pantry into a little passage which came in between the two doors that divided the lobby from the kitchen. Whoever had been in the kitchen had dodged round behind my back, and now was between me and my base: or was the footstep like the clash, and was I to-night the subject of a sustained delusion? By this time I was getting angry, like one who is playing Blind-man's-buff and is being touched on every side by unseen people. Holding the candle in my hand as a life-preserver, for I had laid down the stick on the bed, I wheeled into the kitchen and found myself face to face with flesh and blood at last, for my housekeeper, in light undress, was standing just within the kitchen doorway.

"She was not young and, as I said before, she was not nervous, but terror sat upon her face, and it was to her credit that she did not faint as I came out, candlestick in hand.

"'What is it, sir?' she whispered rather than said, and then she explained that she also had heard the clash, and thought, like myself, that the burglars had come at last. She rose and listened, not knowing whether I were in



bed or in the study, and then had heard me go into the kitchen and had waited anxiously for what would happen. The housekeeper had, indeed, come down part of the stairs in order to give assistance if she could be of any help, and now she had begun to take in the situation.

"Have you seen nobody, sir? What is it?"

"My first idea was to pretend that there had been nothing, and that it was all a false alarm; but she was too shrewd a woman to be deceived, and too sensible to be treated as a child. I admitted that there was a mystery somewhere, but suggested that she had better go to bed again, and prophesied that we should not be troubled in the same way again that night. Before lying down myself—for I did not take off my clothes, in spite of all I said to Margaret—I went through the whole house, into every corner of it except the housekeeper's room, opening cupboard doors, exploring the recesses of wardrobes, and looking under the beds, simply to satisfy myself that no person was concealed in the house, and that we were not being befooled by any

human agency. As I expected, we were not disturbed again, and, I may as well add, have never heard the clash of dishes since.

"During Sunday I had enough to do with my own work, without trying to solve our mystery; but on Monday morning, when the snow was falling heavily and visitation was almost impossible, I wrought upon the problem with all my might; but only arrived at the following somewhat disappointing conclusion—that I was in full possession of my faculties when I heard the noise; that it took place in the kitchen, and could only have been caused by the fall of tinware; that no tinware had fallen, or that it had been immediately replaced; and, therefore, as it had been immediately replaced, and no one was to be found in the premises, there was no natural cause to account for the incident. When I came to seek for a cause outside the natural, I could only speculate, but my mind turned at once to that little room, partly because it was so dreary, partly because I had been so affected by its atmosphere. I examined it again, and this time with the utmost care, and in doing so I

found that there was a slight space, not more than the eighth of an inch, between the rough wood panelling at the top of the bed and the wall. As it was hanging loose, I forced it off with a chisel, and was rewarded for my pains by finding a scrap of paper, faded and mouldy, which I took to the study and spread out very carefully. It seemed to be part of a letter, with the beginning and end removed, and it read as follows:—

"... do not betray me, for it would be ruin at the beginning of my career. Wait till Wednesday night, when I shall come, if I can get away from an engagement



"It was a stealthy footstep in the kitchen."



in Muirtown. Leave the kitchen window unlatched, and remove those confounded tin dishes, or the minister will hear in his room above. If you dare . . . .’ So it ended.

“The letter had lain in its hiding-place for many a year, and now it threw only a faint light upon the past and present. Twenty-five years before, the minister was a man well up in years, and his sister kept house for him. Their servant was the last that used that room, and I learned, by very cautious inquiry, that she was a good-looking girl, and that one morning she was found dead in bed. The cause of death was not very clearly known, but it was supposed to have been failure of the heart. And the only thing that was heard during the night

was the fall of some dishes in the kitchen. The sound awoke the minister, but as he heard nothing more and was an elderly man, he went to sleep again. It was supposed that she had risen to get a light, and had knocked the dishes over by mistake, and that then she had crept back to bed and died. It was four-and-twenty years ago that happened, and no one can tell anything more about the matter. Was it a love affair? Who was the man from Muirtown? Did he come that night? Did he give her some quick poison, or did she die in the excitement of farewell? Was it he who overthrew the dishes that night? Is he dead now himself, and did he come back to rehearse the tragedy? That is all,” said the minister, refilling his pipe.

## IN A FAR COUNTRY.

**WILL** you take me back again,  
Hills and woods I knew of old?  
**Will** you take me back again,  
With my sorrow and my stain,  
**Will** the old-time love still hold?

**Will** you make me whole again,  
Silent hills and sunny land?  
**Broken** dreams I bring to you,  
Who the first young rapture knew,  
**Will** your pity understand?

**Will** you fold me close again?  
For I'm wearying to come;  
**Just** to lay me on your breast,  
In your quiet and your rest,  
**Like** a child—come home.

ARTHUR KETCHUM.



# UNSOLVED

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

## No. II. AN UNHISTORICAL TRAGEDY.

AS the minister had suggested the idea of every man in the party telling an incident in his life which could not be explained on natural grounds, it was inevitable that he should lead the way, but on the second evening there was much hesitation who should follow him. One asked to be excused because he was the youngest, and it would not be respectful to precede his elders, and another because he believed he was the eldest, and the young fellows went first nowadays; another because he had nothing worth telling, and a fourth because he wanted to think over what he had to tell, till at last the Indian soldier took his courage in both his hands. He wished us to understand that a man who had been fighting twenty years in frontier wars, where you never knew when you might have to turn out and hunt a mountain tribe, had no time for literature, and that he could not pretend to tell his yarn like a writing-man; but what he had to say was what had happened, and as it was still fresh in his experience, he was sure of every detail. And we assured him that what we wanted was not eloquent fiction, but plain, downright fact—at least, what seemed fact to each man, for we were careful to distinguish between what really had been and what was our impression.

"When I came home last spring," he began, "after twenty years' thief-hunting in the Indian Highlands, I did not expect any of the friends of former days to remember me, for that kind of work doesn't leave you much time for correspondence; but some of them had seen an absurd paragraph in the papers which gave me credit for a lot of work done by other men, and so among other letters waiting for me on my arrival was one from Jack Stuart. Jack went into the Black Watch when I, for pecuniary reasons, as well as an unholy thirst for fighting, entered the Indian Army, where, if one is lucky, a fellow can fight from January to December for a quarter of a century, and

only one skirmish out of a hundred be heard of at home. A few years afterwards Jack succeeded to his father's estate, and laid claim to an extinct peerage of extreme antiquity, and having proved his case, became Baron Clunas. He now insisted that I should go down at once and resume the habits of civilised life, as he put it, in Clunas Castle, and in the society of his wife, who, he declared—being always a smooth-spoken Highlandman—was dying to see me. He also promised, with a pretty sharp remembrance of past days, that if any old fool proposed to associate my name with the toast of the Army and Navy, he would put him in the guard-room, and that no person at Clunas would make the remotest reference to that confounded Victoria Cross. And upon those reasonable terms, because my heart was warm to old Jack, because I wanted to see how he looked as a Peer of Scotland—and it may be of the United Kingdom, for all I know—I packed up my home-kit, and after a first-rate journey in the good West Coast Express, reached Auchterlonie Junction at 6 p.m., two minutes before time, which was first-rate going. Jack was waiting on the platform, and I knew his old face at once, although he was stouter than he used to be, and looking, as the Scots folk say, "more responsible." No wonder! For he's Lord-Lieutenant of his county now, and they say—but you fellows know more than I do about that—will be in the next Government. He was in great order, and nearly reduced my hand to a pulp, declaring that he hadn't been as happy since the day he was married, that there wasn't a bit of difference upon me after twenty years' campaigning, and all that sort of nonsense; but all the same, it was pleasant to hear, for there are no friends like the old friends. And it wasn't half bad, either, to drive with Jack that June evening along the quiet country road and through the bonny green fields, and then up the avenue of arching beech-trees, and to find oneself welcomed by a gracious woman in a Scots home of the ancient time.

\* Copyright, 1902, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



"First of all, I must have tea; and I can tell you tea from a woman's hand in a Christian home, where you can go to sleep without your revolver close to your hand, makes a man 'feel good,' as the Americans say, after he's been living in tents and barracks for twenty years, sometimes not taking off his clothes for a week on end. While at tea, Lady Clunas told me that they had had rather a calamity at the Castle, and almost thought they ought to wire to me not to come. Some children had arrived a few days before, to spend a week or two with the younger members of the family, and now the whole lot were in for some infectious disease. They didn't know whether it was scarlet fever or chicken-pox, or what it was. They had removed the whole of the young folk to a wing of the Castle, where the guests usually had their rooms, and they were completely shut off; and Lady Clunas hoped that I was not afraid of infection, and that I wouldn't mind not having as good a room as they would have liked to give me. Of course, I assured her that I didn't believe a microbe could get a footing upon such a sun-dried and weather-beaten old fellow as I was; and as regards rooms, if they only saw the places I had slept in, they might be sure any corner that kept out the rain would be luxury to me. I told them that I was awfully glad they had not cancelled their invitation, and so I am to-day, but if you had asked me at 12.30 next morning whether I was comfortable, I tell you I would have exchanged my sleeping quarters in Clunas Castle for the windiest and coldest hillside on the frontier.

After tea, Clunas took me to my room; but I paid little attention to it, except that it was some distance from the heart of the house, and that it was large and old-fashioned. During dinner we talked of old days, what had become of this man and that man, what had happened at home and abroad; we tasted the former jests again and told the familiar stories of the past, and then we drifted to his peerage, and Jack explained that it was as old as the days of Queen Mary, that it had been lost in '45, being attainted for treason, and that everyone had been pleased that his family had got it back again. The Castle had always been in their possession, although most of the land they now possessed had come through a fortunate marriage; but he said the things he valued most of their hereditary possessions were certain relics of Queen Mary which had belonged to a relative when he was a lad, but

had recently been left to him. As every man is interested in Mary, even although, like myself, he never reads a book and knows nothing about the controversies that are always going on over her character and doings, my curiosity was at once excited, and I asked what kind of relics. 'All sorts of things,' he said, 'for you must know that the Clunas of that day was Mary's very good friend, and stuck by her through thick and thin, and it is said did some very curious things for her. Would you care to see them?' Jack asked.

"We were sitting at the time in his sanctum, which was half library, half smoking-room, where he kept his special possessions and did all his business. He rose and crossed to a recess, where he opened a heavy oak door and then showed me a safe built into the wall. 'As the things are rather valuable on account of their antiquity, we keep them locked up.' Opening the safe door with a key which he carried in his pocket, he lifted out a box bound with iron, and opened it with another key which he took from a private drawer in his writing-table. Then he laid the contents upon the table, and though I am not romantic or any of that kind of thing, I felt as if I were in the presence of Queen Mary. There was a ciborium, described in an old catalogue: 'ane Lawer with a cowp and a cover of copper ennamallit, engraved with Old Testament subjects.' There was a locket formed of a cameo having on one side a representation of the Crucifixion, and on the other the Scourging of Christ, set in a gold frame with an agate cover; this locket was attached to a necklace of twenty pieces of agate all mounted in gold. There was also a hand-bell which was used by the Queen during her captivity, with the Royal Arms of Scotland upon it, and the monogram for Francis and Mary; and there was also a covered tankard of agate, having on the handle a lion's head and a rose. One forgot the centuries between and saw Mary sitting at the high table in Holyrood with the ciborium before her, or dancing at a ball in the palace and wearing the necklace of agates, or sitting alone in Lochleven Castle, then wearying for someone's company, and ringing the hand-bell. As I held the necklace in my hand, I wondered, as many men have done, whether all the stories told about her were true or not; whether she had anything to do with the murder of her husband; whether, in fact, she was a beautiful, unscrupulous, treacherous woman, or the saint that her friends would have her to be, or



whether she was, after all, just like other people, half sinner and half saint, and much sinned against.

"‘Interesting, rather,’ said Jack. ‘Why, if one were a magician, or even a spiritualist, I suppose, with that necklace in his hand, he could summon up Queen Mary some night and repeat the scenes of long ago. One could correct the historians then and pick up lots of incidents that have been forgotten. She must have turned many a man’s head

on Darnley. She was just the young woman, I suspect, to finger either the necklace or the dagger as suited her mood at the time. Has it any story attached to it?’ ‘Well,’ said Clunas, ‘there is a yarn about the thing which came rambling down from one person to another, till one of our people a century ago put it into writing. It isn’t much, after all, and there may not be a word of truth in it, but its very existence shows the kind of thing that went on in those days at Holy-

rood. More Frenchmen than Chatelar were in love with Mary Stuart, and, if it be not blasphemy against our fair Queen, some of them were said to have been more fortunate. According to the story—but I only give it,’ Clunas added, ‘for what it’s worth, and that, I dare say, is nothing—a French lord got this necklace as a pledge of love from Mary, and then he

must needs talk of it, and there was black trouble in Holyrood. One night, drinking in a tavern, he boasted to Lord Seton of the necklace, and Seton gave him the lie direct, saying that he never had any such gift from the Queen, and that he was nothing but a liar. Whereupon it was agreed, before they parted, that Seton and the French lord should meet in duel in the Queen’s park early next morning, and that the French lord should bring the necklace with him to prove that he had

not lied. But Seton left declaring that no necklace would ever be seen, that therefore he would need no rapier for the French lord, but that he would beat him with a dog-whip as a slanderer of the Queen. That night the Frenchman was stabbed to death in his bed within Holyrood, and the next day, when some rumour of the tavern quarrel went round the Court, the Queen laughed with scorn and said that the French lords forgot themselves; and as she laughed,



"‘If you play any longer with that dagger, old man, you’ll be having nightmare.’"

that we never heard of, I daresay,’ added Jack, ‘and been in many a man’s power whom she wanted to get rid of.’ As he spoke, he took up the only other article in the box and held it in his hand. It was a dagger with a short, strong handle made of silver, and a long, thin, steel blade of fine temper, and whose point was still keen. ‘Is that another of the Queen’s possessions?’ I asked. ‘It’s a vicious-looking thing, and might very well have put the fear of death



the courtiers saw the necklace around her neck. No one knew who had stabbed the French lord, and no one could speak true about the necklace; but this is certain, the Queen gave the necklace, before she went to England, to the Clunas of that day, and this dagger came down with it. I yield to no man,' concluded Jack, 'in admiration for Mary's beauty and her cleverness; but I rather think that the trimmie had the blood of more men upon her conscience than history ever tells.' As we smoked, I took up the necklace in one hand and I held the dagger in the other, and I declare—of course, I ought to mention this, for it may bear on what happened—it seemed to me as if they were linked together, the murderous blade that may have let out many a man's life and the ornament for a queen's neck, with its sacred scenes carved in the locket, just as I've read somewhere that in those days religion and crime and intrigue and murder were all tied up together.

"If you play any longer with that dagger, old man," said Clunas, "you'll be having nightmare. I think we had better lock the gruesome thing up along with the trinkets and turn in, for you've had a long journey, and twenty years without a decent sleep." So he placed the relics in the box, shut it up in the safe, and started to convey me to my bedroom. It was then, and not before, that I noticed how far the room was from the other quarters of the Castle. It was reached by a long passage with a stone floor, which seemed to pass

through a region of rooms stored with books, antiquities, and the general wreckage of centuries, which for some reason or other was preserved—very likely because no successor cared to dispose of an accumulation which contained the history of his family.



"I looked below the bed."

We looked into one or two of the rooms, and when I reached my bedroom I had an impression of having travelled back three centuries and being in the middle of the sixteenth. The room itself required no apology from my host, for it was large and high, and I had noticed that its two windows



looked out upon a beautiful stretch of green and trees. Its furniture, I could see at a glance, belonged to the days of long ago, and would have fetched a large sum in a London auction-room from the people who ransack the country for old oak and the fashions of the past. With the exception of a modern armchair drawn near to the fire—for even in early summer a fire is welcome at Clunas Castle—and the sitz-bath in a corner of the room, and my things laid out on the dressing-table, there was nothing modern in my bedroom. Every bit of furniture looked as if it had a history and deserved special study; but the chief features of the room were the bed and a huge cabinet. The bed was of enormous size, and I judged must measure eight feet by six at least. It was, indeed, so enormous that I chaffed my host about it.

“Well, if I have to make up twenty years’ arrears of decent Christian sleep, you have fairly equipped me for the task. Why, man, that bed would hold three people, one way; and if they chose to sleep across the bed, there would be room for four. Where did this gorgeous ark come out of?”

“They say, if you must have it, that it started its history in Holyrood Palace, and that the curtains were embroidered by Mary’s own hand. They are certainly very much like some work of hers which we possess; but then it has always been a joke in our family that everything ought to be assigned to Mary; till at last one of my boys persuaded an English visitor, who was quite gone on Mary, that the new billiard-table which had just come down from London was one on which Mary and Darnley had played a famous match with Knox and Moray. We had better call the embroidery “of the school of Mary,” just as they palm off doubtful Italian pictures with the name of Da Vinci. One thing, however, you may depend on, if it’s any pleasure to you—the bed is of the sixteenth century and once was in a room at Holyrood.”

“And this magnificent cabinet—for it would be a shame to call it wardrobe—did Queen Mary keep her dresses in it, or was it honoured with her library? It was fit to hold her jewels. What a magnificent piece of work! I suppose the doors open?” For the front consisted of two great carved doors with a canopy above.

“It is rather a fine piece of furniture,” Jack said indifferently. “People that know say the workmanship is perfect. It seems to me rather a gloomy-looking ornament

for a bedroom, although I suppose it was used at one time; and it came to us, so the tradition runs, along with the bed. It’s not much use now, for there is so little practical accommodation inside, and the doors are so heavy to work, that it’s never opened; and as this room is very rarely used, and never by women, you will see a wardrobe has been rigged up in that recess with curtains. Just as I thought—it’s locked; so that if there’s any restless person of the sixteenth century inside, he’s safely locked up for the night. Well, I hope you have everything and that you’ll be comfortable. I’m only sorry that you’re not in brighter quarters; but if there’s anyone can hold an outpost, they say you’re the man.”

“I closed the door after him. I heard him tramp along the stone passage, where he closed one or two doors of rooms which we had left open, and then I heard the big door shut that cut off the wing from the centre of the Castle, and I was in solitary possession of the whole place.

“It was only a quarter past eleven, and from eleven to twelve in an English bedroom, except in the height of summer, is one of the most pleasant experiences of the day, especially to a man who has been for years out of his country. What I generally do is to get into my easiest coat and softest shoes, to pull the most comfortable chair opposite the fire, and to settle down for an hour’s reading with the most interesting book I can lay my hands on in the house. This is a reward for a day’s work or twenty years’ exile; for there are no bedrooms anywhere like the ones in England—and, of course, I mean Scotland also, for it seems to me quite childish to be obliged to talk of Great Britain and Ireland when you mean the home country. As regards the furniture of the room, I honestly confess I never examine it. If there’s a good hard bed and a good soft chair, plenty of water and a glass to shave by, with a peg or two for your kit, I ask no more and don’t care what else is in the room.

“That night, however—and I am keeping the bargain about telling everything—I did not sit down at least for a quarter of an hour in the armchair, and partly because—well, I may at once admit it—I felt doubtful about that room, and thought I had better make a reconnaissance just to make sure that there were no Afridis, either Indian or Scots, in the brushwood. First of all I satisfied myself that the black wardrobe was really locked, and about that there could



be no question. I then explored the recesses of the room, where there were one or two little cabinets which were empty, and, indeed, could not have held anything larger than a cat, and finally I gave my attention to the bed. The bedding was all modern, I was glad to find, with a good stiff mattress which must have been made by special order. I studied the embroidery with a candle, and imagined the fingers that worked on the now faded silk, and the face that bent over it—beautiful, of course—in fact, grew quite poetical. And then—you see, I am making a clean breast of everything, and—you fellows needn't laugh—I looked below the bed.

"Of course, I know that the great difference between the two sexes is that a woman always looks below the bed in her room, and that a man never dreams of doing such a thing. As I am not married, I suppose that is true about women; but I can swear that it was the first time I had ever looked below a bed before getting in.

"There could be no doubt that I had the room to myself, or, at least, that if there was anyone in the room, he was safely secured; and then I sat down to read 'John Inglesant.' It seems to me, though I don't pretend to be a judge of books, awfully well done, and to make the old days of the seventeenth century quite real, even to a man who doesn't know much about it; but I could not get into the spirit of the book, even although I established the chair where I could see the whole room, laughing at myself as an old fool, and chaffing myself for imagining that I was once more on watch for the enemy. So I closed the book, undressed, and got into bed; but there was something on my nerves, and I placed my revolver within reach. The bed was so huge that I could not make up my mind where to sleep in it, and finally—I wish you to remember this, for the arrangement explains the situation—as I do not use a bolster and pillow, being accustomed, as you can understand, to sleep with a low head, I removed the bolster and divided as it were the bed with it, so that it was as if two people were sleeping in it side by side. Then I put a pillow under my head, and as the firelight played upon the embroidery of the curtains and the carved work of the cabinet, I fell a-speculating how many persons had slept in that bed, and how many had died in it; and then I wondered whether anyone had been murdered in it; and then at last the silk roses on the curtains and the black oak-heads on the wardrobe got mixed up together, and

I began to talk in a friendly way with Queen Mary, and she asked me questions about the frontier, and I offered her 'John Inglesant' to read, and so I fell asleep.

"I had not slept long, perhaps half-an-hour—it could not have been much past twelve o'clock when I woke, for the fire was still burning and one could still see things in the room. What made me wake, as I consider, was the creaking of a door, and I turned my eyes at once to the cabinet. As I looked, one of the doors seemed to shake as if it were moved from behind; but I said to myself that this was only the effect of the light of the fire shimmering on its face. Then I heard it distinctly creak, as if its lower edge were rasping over wood. The other door began to move, and I sat up in bed. Was there someone concealed in that mysterious piece of furniture, and was I, after all my Indian fighting, to be now a party in a burglary squabble? or—and the past took hold upon me. Another creak, and the two doors were distinctly coming out. Whatever be the cause, the cabinet will soon reveal itself, and it would just be as well to be prepared. I reached out my hand for the revolver. The door nearest me was now clear of the woodwork and began slowly to turn out, and I threw off the bedclothes. The other door swung itself clear with a further creak and also turned outwards. Perhaps, after all, they had never been locked, and heat plays curious tricks with furniture, making it speak and opening its doors; but it would be just as well to take no chances. It seemed to me that now, if it were simply that the temperature had cooled, and the doors, which had expanded in the heat, had now contracted, and were opening of their own accord, they ought to swing more quickly; while they were being opened gently and stealthily, as if someone were behind them, but did not wish his presence to be known. Besides, had not the cabinet been locked? Altogether, it was only wise to be on guard, and I quietly slipped out of the bed on the side further from the wardrobe, and from the shadow in the distant corner of the room, with revolver in hand, watched events. I'll trouble you for a match; this cheroot has gone out. Thanks! Oh, it's drawing quite well. Where was I? Oh, yes. Rather absurd, wasn't it, to be watching an old wardrobe in the nineteenth century as if you expected a ghost? and, of course, I know you'll say all the time it was a dream.





"The light shone on the dagger which I had seen that evening."



"Well, to go on, and to describe what, at any rate, I believe I saw, the two doors were still being quietly and, as I would put it, carefully opened—and was that a hand? Almost unconsciously I felt, just to be sure, that my revolver was in working order. Yes, the light could not have created those four white fingers—their whiteness impressed me at the moment, and—you know how quickly the brain works—suggested the hand of a gentleman. I knew this was not a burglar—and yet? The doors were now more than half open, and in the recess of the cabinet I could indistinctly trace the outline of a figure, but not in our dress. Still they are opening and are now three-quarters back, and without doubt, half standing, half crouching, there is a man within the cabinet who is pushing the doors open with great caution. As one of them is now between the interior of the cabinet and the light of the fire, I could see nothing more but that he was there, and that he was stirring as if about to make his exit. First I saw his foot come out and descend to the floor, for the cabinet was raised above a foot from the level of the floor. I saw his leg to the knee, and recognised the dress of the sixteenth century, and, so far as I could tell, that of a nobleman. Then the blackness turned into a cloak, the other foot appeared, and the figure was now in the shadow made by the open door. The face I could not see because of the shadow, and because of what seemed to me to be a velvet bonnet brought down low on the forehead, while the left hand of the figure raised a cloak and covered the lower part of the face, but the right hand seemed to be free.

"I was now convinced either that I was the subject of a fool's trick, which was impossible, or that—and there one must leave it. I felt a drop of perspiration trickle down my forehead and fall on the back of the hand which held the revolver. The figure crept forward in a crouching attitude and now was clear of the door, but even out of the shadow I could see nothing of the face except a whiteness and two eyes, partly because the light was faint, but chiefly because of the bonnet and the cloak. It

crept to the bedside, while I—well, I raised the revolver to defend myself, and yet with a curious double sense that a revolver was a useless thing, being three centuries out of date. The figure now is at the bedside and seems to be searching, as one looks for a place to strike; and then suddenly I saw the right hand, which before I had only noticed in the cloak, lifted, and the light shone on the dagger which I had seen that evening in the box. Then the dagger descended with a lightning stroke upon what well might have been the sleeping form of a man on that side of the bed. Once, twice, and then I fired. Even as I aimed and pulled the trigger, I knew it was no use, but it was all that I could do, and—I must do something, after which I suppose I fainted. And that I had never done in my life before.

"When I came to myself, it was three o'clock and the room was full of light. I was lying in the corner where I had been standing, and the revolver was by my side. My first glance was at the bed, where I saw the clothes flung back as I had left them. With an effort I rose till I could see across the bed to the cabinet. The doors were closed, and it looked as it had done when I entered the room. There was no trace of any disturbance, and when I examined the bolster there was no dagger mark. Had it been all a dream? And perhaps I would have come to that conclusion had it not been that one chamber of the revolver was empty, and that I must have fainted in that corner.

"Next morning, to satisfy myself, and on the excuse of interest in the cabinet, I got Clunas to hunt about until a key was found that would open it. Of course it was empty, but in the back of it there was the hole, which I only detected, made by a revolver bullet which had passed through the wood and lodged in the wall behind. Yes, I slept for four nights afterwards in that room, but I saw nothing more, and all I say about the incident is this, that it would have been better for that French lord either to have had nothing to do with Queen Mary—who was a curse to everyone who loved her—or else never to have slept in a room with a closed oaken cabinet."





# UNSOLVED.

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

## No. III.—AN UNSEEN PRESENCE.



It was agreed among ourselves upon the Moor that the Indian soldier had done his duty the night before in a simple and straightforward manner, and that an obligation lay on the rest of us to follow his lead. There was a dispute in the evening between the writing-man and the barrister which should go first, and so much time was being lost that we called upon the soldier to order either he pleased to the front, and he chose the writing-man because he hoped the professional skill in story-telling would make up for his own poverty of speech the night before. And after we had all protested that nothing could have been better than the soldier's description of his midnight skirmish in the sixteenth century, and after we had insisted that the writing-man was not to dazzle us with the preciosities of literary style, or foist upon our simplicity some elaborately wrought fiction, we lay back in our chairs, and this was the story he told:—

“While I have been a citizen of many places, and have no local roots, I took my degree at Edinburgh, and am proud of that slight connection with the austere capital of Scotland. Last week I travelled over Edinburgh on the top of an electric car to enjoy the glory of Princes Street once more, and to revive certain memories of the past in greyer streets and less fashionable quarters. In the afternoon I found myself in what is called the South Side, a district of which the West End of Edinburgh professes to be ignorant, but where a considerable number of well-doing citizens live and bring up their families, and which is much frequented by students. I did not notice where we were till suddenly, at a stoppage of the car, I looked up and saw above me the top floor of a four-storey building, and a corner room

with a window on the main street and one on a narrow lane at the side. At the sight of that commonplace room I started from my seat and left the car as by a sudden masterful attraction. It was not simply that in the days of long ago a student had lived and worked and had good fellowship in that room, for he had other lodgings in Edinburgh which he would not have looked at twice, and some of which he had forgotten. It was because the sight of that room, even from the roof of a tram-car, brought up before him the most inexplicable experience of his life, and the most gruesome.

“It came upon me that I should like, so far as might be, to renew the impression of more than thirty years ago, and I went up the lane and stood at the door which gives access to the flats above. I rang the upper bell, and noted from the brass plate that a maiden lady was now the tenant of the house—Miss Jane McKittrick. The door was opened from above by an ingenious arrangement which I used to admire because it secured the privacy of the stair, and saved the servants from the inconvenience of coming down with the call of every visitor. I mounted the familiar steps, and remembered how in a panic of my heart I had thought of bolting down them once in the early morning of a winter day, that I might escape from I knew not what, but, at any rate, save myself soul and body from an awful and hostile presence. When a trim and demure servant—the handmaid of an elderly, highly respected unmarried lady—met me at the top of the stair, and seemed, so far as her face expressed anything, to ask what such a person as I appeared to be could want with her mistress, I came to myself and faced an embarrassing situation. Was I to ask whether Miss McKittrick was at home, and would be good enough to see an unknown and somewhat Bohemian-looking visitor, and then, when I had got Miss McKittrick calmed after the excitement of a stranger's invasion, and settled down in *the* room, was I to tell her how I used to toil long hours in that room, to say nothing of many a smoking conference with

\* Copyright, 1903, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



men—some of whom are famous now, some of whom are dead—and what befell me one night when none of those men was with me? If I did, and my speech came within a thousand miles of the reality, then Miss McKittrick would certainly faint, and the demure maidservant, when I brought her in haste, would shriek, people would come up from the flat below, and the police would arrive later, and I could not imagine what crime I might not be charged with. Certainly there would be a scandal and a paragraph in the evening papers, Miss McKittrick would leave her irreproachable little house that afternoon, and I, who had none of my own, would be a breaker up of homes, and very likely be prosecuted by the landlord for malicious injury of his property. Which sobering vision passed like a flash before my eyes, while I seemed to be looking into the face of Miss McKittrick's carefully trained and highly proper handmaiden, and she on her part was questioning me by her countenance whether I had come to sell gas-burners or sewing-machines.

"I came to a hasty resolution to be honest up to a point, and having by good luck discovered a card in my waistcoat pocket, I asked Elizabeth—for that was what Miss McKittrick called her, just as her young man would call her Lizzie—to take it to her mistress with my compliments, and to ask whether of her kindness I might see her for a moment. After a moment's hesitation, and a flattering decision on the part of Elizabeth that I was neither selling nor begging, nor likely to steal ornaments from the table, I was shown into the very room, and stood in an instant on the very spot, where I had fought for my life. After an ancient bedroom, with a Queen Mary's bed and a ghostly cabinet, my room, I fear, will seem a poor thing, for it was only the little drawing-room of a fourth floor flat, and furnished according to the taste of an Edinburgh maiden lady, who collected once a year for the Indigent Gentlewomen's Fund, and held strong views on the principles of a Free Kirk. A highly respectable and prim little room, with a chiffonier full of missionary curiosities, a venerable piano, antimacassars upon the chairs, and for ornaments on the mantelpiece wax flowers and alabaster vases. On the table lay the 'Life' of that eminent Highland divine, the Rev. Dugald MacTavish, a copy of Mrs. Heman's poems, and the report of the District Visitation Society. Upon the face of it, it was a ghost-proof room, so proper and so orthodox that no tricky spirit,

wandering to and fro and looking out for a temporary resting-place, was likely to cross the threshold. Nor was it a whit more romantic thirty years before, when it was the sitting-room of a light-hearted and very casual student, who was studying much against his will, and would much rather have been fishing on a Highland burn, or riding on his sheltie along a moorland road. Curious to say, there was a piano then, which aided us to the best of its jingling ability in 'Villikins and his Dinah,' 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home,' 'John Brown's Knapsack was Number 24,' and other high-class student ballads of the period, and there was also a chiffonier in my day, the interior of which was used for keeping tobacco, and the top of which was ornamented with fencing-foils. Mr. MacTavish's 'Life' had not then appeared, and the District Visitation report had somehow been forgotten, so the table was piled with classics which were loved, and mathematical books which were hated, relieved by a volume of Artemus Ward, then in his glory, or Guy Livingstone, whom we thought rather a dashing writer, and the old maid's perjinck settee very different from the sofa on which a student and his friends sprawled at length, and whose holes and corners were stuffed with tobacco ash. But otherwise the same room, and a room which an historical and aristocratic ghost would be ashamed to enter.

"Miss McKittrick was the tidiest and timidest of little single ladies, and at first neither sat down nor invited me to take a seat; but after I'd thrown myself upon her mercy, and pleaded that I was a middle-aged and world-battered man who had bethought himself of his student days, and wished to see the rooms in which he had prepared for his degree, the good soul relapsed her natural reserve and her vague suspicion of unknown male visitors. She felt it was a lad's romance and she forgot her years and mine—there is no kinder soul than a sweet-blooded old maiden lady—and she not only bade me welcome to my old room, but with a nice tact she suggested that I would doubtless like to be alone for a little; so Miss McKittrick went out, closing the door, and left me with the past.

"I took a chair as like the one I used to have as could be found in Miss McKittrick's room, and sat down at the table, and opposite me, nothing between us but mathematical books and sheets of paper, sat my coach on the night before it happened. It was all very well, you must know, in those days to



be a fair scholar in Latin and Greek, and even to have the trick of prose translation from English into Latin; but unless you could pass a certain modest standard in mathematics and natural philosophy, your classics would avail you nothing, and you could not get a degree. As I hated Euclid worse than anything, except trigonometry, and had not the slightest interest either in the laws of light or heat, it was necessary that some practised hand should cram me for the occasion—that is how I came to know McKinnon. It did not matter where I asked, or how I put my case, as soon as men got an inkling of the situation, every one of them said: 'Get Angus McKinnon.' They said that there had not been for twenty years such a mathematician known in the University as this West Highland Celt, and that if he ever got to Cambridge, he would take the Senior Wranglership walking, but that he would never get out of Edinburgh because he couldn't take his degree, never having been able even to translate Cæsar or to distinguish one Greek letter from another; that his power of calculation reduced the mathematical professor to silent admiration; that he was as familiar with the fourth dimension as with the University public-house, which was saying a good deal; that he could teach mathematics to a Highland cattle beast, and that he had passed men through that department of their degree who were barely sane; that he knew almost every question an examiner would ask, and crammed his pupils with answers which they remembered for about seven days and never understood; that his power of drinking was portentous, and that it was doubtful whether he was ever sober; that his temper was satanic, and his profanity an absolute monopoly, but that his genius for passing a fool through mathematics was beyond question. Therefore my friends agreed, with painful unanimity, that if I ever expected to get a degree, I should secure the services of Angus McKinnon. It was in a public-house that I found him about 10 a.m., and it was evident that he had already been 'tasting,' but he was sober enough to demand a heavy fee in advance, and to declare, after half-a-dozen searching questions, that he thought I was on the whole, in the matter of mathematics, the greatest ass he had yet come across. He added, however, that if I were willing, as he put it, to 'mind what I will be telling you, and to be working night and day, and not to be meddling with speerits'—which, he explained, was a temptation avoided by all

mathematicians—'he would pass me through, or' (and on reaching this point he brought a gigantic fist down upon the table) 'he would see both himself and me in a part of the universe where the question of degrees would be of little importance.' As I looked upon him for the first time in that classic place—six feet two in height, forty-two inches round the chest, black-haired and black-bearded, with a strong-cut face and gleaming eyes—I could see beneath the drinking, and the recklessness, and the swearing, and the roughness, that there was a strength of iron will and unquenchable manhood in Angus McKinnon.

"Again McKinnon and I were facing one another across the table on which, under his fiery compulsion, I had been forced to drudge for two months as I had never done in all my life; and again McKinnon was showing me methods of solving equations so rapid and ingenious that even I could work them in a few minutes; and finally drilling into my mind the principles of geometry with such force that I remember a very few of them even to this day; and taking me through a hundred questions, out of which he was certain the examiners would ask twenty-five, and impressing upon me with triumphant emphasis that if I only stuck to the twenty-five he had prepared me for, and left severely alone the others he had not anticipated, and which with much frankness he implored me not to attempt lest I should reveal my idiotcy, he was prepared to swear, and did swear at some length, I would pass the mathematics. When I showed any intelligence, he was agreeable to the point of contempt, declaring that if my father had given me any real education when I was young, something could have been made of me; and when I did not follow him in a short cut through a calculation, he was fearsome, both in his looks and language; and when I had not worked for him as he expected, he would lose all control, and sweep the books off the table, and storm like a bull. As I was not a boy, there were times when I was almost roused to rebel against this violence, but I frankly confess that there was a fierceness and a virility about Angus which had, to use the Scots phrase, put the fear of death upon stronger men than I was. Besides, one found that underneath the coarseness there was a heart in the man, and, even though it seems absurd to say it, a certain tenderness. He was honestly concerned about my passing, much more than about his fees, although he had driven



so hard a bargain. It was evident that he would be much pleased if I obtained my degree, although his chance of obtaining one was the remotest; and there was a certain friendliness which disarmed him of half his offence. Frankly, I came to like McKinnon, and perhaps through the insight of this sympathy, I began to speculate about



"Sober enough to demand a heavy fee in advance."

the problem of his life. It was not a thing unheard of that a Celt should 'taste,' but that a man of such trenchant intellect and will-power should play the fool before the eyes of all men, and be the song of the drunkards, demanded some solution. Had there been some tragedy in his life? Was his heart eaten by vain regret? Was he

really a broken-hearted and hopeless man killing remembrance by alternate bouts of study and drinking? He never once alluded to himself or to his life, and he was not the man whom anyone could question. One night he lit his pipe and stood upon the hearthrug looking into the fire, while I wrought out a problem he had set me, and glancing to see whether he was growing impatient, I noticed that the fashion of his countenance had altered. The fierceness and the restlessness had given place to an expression of unspeakable sadness, and if ever I saw remorse and despair upon a human face, it was that night. When we resumed work, McKinnon was courteous as only a Celt can be, and as he was on rare occasions when he seemed to come to himself. When he rose to go, I took my courage in both my hands and tried to say what was in my heart. What I did say I really do not know, but he understood. He looked at me

for what seemed a whole minute in silence, then he put his hands upon my shoulder. I realised how handsome McKinnon must have been before his face was coarsened—and he said: 'Pray God you may never do in an instant what you will be regretting all the days of your life—when it is too late, too late.' He left the room and let himself out. I had the sense not to follow, but from the window I saw him cross the street. I watched him till he disappeared, and that was the last time I saw McKinnon alive.

"Next day I sat for the mathematical exam., and as soon as I saw the paper was certain that I would pass. No wonder the incapables sang the praises of Angus McKinnon, and declared that the gift of second sight in the matter of examinations was given to that Celt, for seventy-five per cent. of the questions I had already worked over, and with the balance I did not meddle. When I left the examination-hall, my heart was full of gratitude to McKinnon, and I expected to see him at the door, for it was his way to meet his pupils when they came out and to hurry them into some corner, to snatch the paper out of their hands, to run it over in an instant, reviewing the imbecility of the examiners in ever returning upon their own tracks, or acknowledging their genius in setting questions which he had not anticipated,



and then dragging out from the unfortunate candidate what he had done and how he had done it, and what he had not done and why he had not done it; and then to announce to him with absolute infallibility either his success or his failure. Angus was not in the passage, nor in the quadrangle, nor lurking anywhere beneath the great arches of the entrance, nor in ambush at the gate. And I was inwardly cast down, for I knew that, thanks to him, I had done well, and, I confess it, I had hoped—having heard of such a thing—that he would shake hands with me. I hurried over to the University place of refreshment, into a back room which was a common haunt of McKinnon's. He was not there, nor had he called that morning. I inquired here and there among the men, but no one had seen Angus; and they began to remark upon his absence, for he was a figure on examination days. Once, when Angus had had an international difference with four foreign students, none of whom attended classes for a fortnight afterwards, and he could not appear himself for a single day, I had gone to work at his rooms; now, with a chill upon my heart which I could not explain, I paid my second visit. When his landlady opened the door, I knew what had happened, and she, recognising me, began to wail, as a right-thinking and well-bred Scots-woman ought to do on such an occasion.

"'Come in, bye,' she said, with many tears; 'come in, bye; I ken yer face—ye were here a fortnight last Wednesday. An awfu' dispensation, and terrible sudden; gaein' aboot yesterday as livin' like as oorsels, and lyin' cauld this mornin'. A solemn warnin' to be prepared, and no to be pittin' aff to the last; there to-day, and here to-morrow,' added the excellent woman, with some confusion.

"'No that he was juist himsel' last nicht, for ye could hardly tell that he had been tastin'. He cam hame aboot ten instead o' twelve, and he was that quiet that I jaloused

(suspected) there was something wrong; and he was that ceevil I was quite concerned, and I asked him if he wudna be the better of a warm drink.

"'There's nae doubt that he was given to tastin', and it was awfu' what he could carry, and he micht let drop an aith at a time when he was contradicted; but eh! sir, he was a learned man, and though he never



"I was beaten back."

gaed to kirk, he wud never let a word be said against the confession of faith. There was an impident whipper-snapper o' an English student that he was tutorin', and didna the body speak aw' nicht in this verry hoose—for I heard it through the open door—against John Calvin? And if Mr. McKinnon didna give him sic a round o' swearin'—for there's nae doobt he was a grand swearer—that the cratur came oot o' the room as white as



a sheet. I'll warrant the smatchit'll no meddle wi' Calvin again,' said the landlady, with much appreciation of McKinnon's theological accomplishments, both in faith and word. 'A weel built and responsible lookin' man, and regular in his payments every Saturday night, though there were times he could hardly see the money. But we have all oor faults, sir, and his were upon the surface, and no worth mentioning the day. I'm judgin', from what he said to that Episcopalian haveril, that the root of the matter was in Mr. McKinnon. Ye'll be wantin' to see him?' and the landlady dropped her voice.

"It was in his sitting-room, littered with books and papers, black with calculations, that the landlady had reviewed Angus's character, and now we passed into the little bedroom which opened from the other room, and I looked on my tutor. He had already been dressed for burial, and the landlady was satisfied with his appearance.

"'Naeboddy, I have been telt, kent much about him, and they say he has no friends. It's a sad thing to be a lonely man. I considered that he was never happy, and mebbe he had his own trials; but he's sleepin' peacefu' now, and he never looked so bonny in his life as he does this day.

"'Yes, I sent for a doctor, and he said it was the heart; but it disna matter what it was. He's gone, and except yersel' and mebbe some other young gentleman that he tutored, and the college fouk that thocht so much of him, there's nobody to mourn him or take charge of him. Here's the key of his box. I've touched naething, and mebbe ye would open it and see whether ye can find the address of ony friend that should be asked to the funeral. And there's aye thing mair, sir,' and the landlady's voice dropped to an awe-struck whisper: 'when we dressed him, I found this little leather pouch hanging on his breast, and do ye see that it is sealed and that I havna opened it. Would ye tak charge o' it in case some friend should come to claim it? Ye might open it to see if he has left any directions.'

"Once more I looked at my tutor; then, when the landlady had gone into the sitting-room, I kissed him and bade him farewell, realising then that in the short time I had known him I had come to love McKinnon. In the presence of the landlady I broke the seal and opened the little packet. It contained one short letter; but when I saw that the letter had no address, and was signed by a woman, I put it back in the case, and the

case into my pocket, and told the landlady that it threw no light upon his family, but that I would keep it till it was claimed. I went to my rooms, forgetting that I had passed in mathematics and was now sure of my degree, and remembering only the tragedy of Angus McKinnon.

"It was our boyish way to celebrate the evening after a degree exam. by attending a Christy Minstrel function, and joining cheerfully in the choruses; but that night I shut myself in the room where I am, as it were, sitting while I tell this story, and which by every book and paper reminded me of Angus, and I mourned till night had passed into the morning. It is fair to take into account that I had been working for a fortnight till three in the morning, as well as the livelong day; that I had had no physical exercise, and had been intensely anxious—in short, that my nerves were overstrained; and now, upon the head of all, had come Angus's unexpected death, which in my heart I believed, and suspected the doctor knew, had been some form of suicide. The room was already, in my imagination, full of McKinnon before I took the packet out of my pocket and read the letter, at which before I had only glanced. With the after-look I am free to confess that I ought not to have read the letter, and that in all the circumstances I should have destroyed it unread. My excuse was then and is now, that it was not the curiosity of a stranger, but the love of a friend that moved me, for I was convinced that I held in my hand the secret of Angus McKinnon. As I took the letter out, I felt as if I should ask his permission, and for the moment as if across the table he had refused it with a fearful look, and had stretched out his hand to recover the letter. My fingers trembled when I unfolded the single sheet which contained on one side the whole letter. The writing was that of a well-educated woman, who through weakness was scarcely able to form the letters, and had to pause between the sentences, and this is what I read:—

"'DEAREST ONE,—The doctor says that I am dying, and there is something I wish to say to you before I die. I will write as well as I can, and the letter will be carried by sure hands. I have said that I slipped and was injured in the falling, and I charge you, as my last request, that you keep silence. I forgive you what you did, for it was your love turned into rage, and not your hand, which struck me. You know now that I



was never untrue to you, my heart's love, and I die loving you as you love me.

" 'Your faithful MORAG.'

"One understood it in a moment—his love for Morag, a girl of his own race by the name, though educated in the English speech, his jealousy of some other lover, his hot passion in some evil hour, and the ghastly issue which killed Morag and sent Angus forth to live in unquenchable remorse and self-loathing. As I held the letter in my hand, I was conscious of a strange and penetrating sensation, and now words, I am afraid, will fail to convey my experience. It was as if a wind were pouring into the room through some opening in the wall and filling the room with a new and strange atmosphere which surrounded me and chilled me. Holding the letter in my hand, I rose and faced the door as if it had entered, and then I turned to the table as if someone were standing opposite me; then I made an effort and flung off the impression, and sat down again by the fire and read the letter again—I will not deny it—with tears. Poor Angus! Oh, the sorrow of things! I started to my feet imagining I had been touched, and looked round the room, where every corner was visible and in which every sight was commonplace. Where was it? And now, under a compulsion, which I could not resist, of nervous terror, but at which I laughed within my heart, I searched the room—below the table, under the couch, in the shadow beyond the piano; and, still despising myself, I opened the doors of the chiffonier, in which nothing larger than a cat could have hidden, and lifted the lid of the piano. Nothing, of course. And although I did all this, I did not expect to find anything—I was not really looking for any visible person. Still holding the letter in my hand, I came back to my chair and was about to sit down, when, so far as I can describe it, the Presence in the room gathered itself together and came close to me and tried to master me.

"As I stood beside the table, my hands clenched and hanging by my side, and my feet rooted in the floor, the Presence flung itself round me as one would do who was trying to carry a person away; and although I knew not what it was, and knew not where it would carry me, I was convinced that I must resist with all my might, and that the resistance lay somehow in my will. If I—the personal being that says I—yielded for an instant, I would be lost, and the idea of

lost, in the sense of yielding to this Presence, was charged with horror. It was a wrestle for life or death, and lasted perhaps only five minutes, and then the strain relaxed and I had for the moment conquered; I sank into the chair, and the perspiration rolled, rather in a stream than in drops, off my face. A horror laid hold upon me that, while the gas-lamps were burning in the street outside, and I could hear the sound of a belated passenger and the distant rattle of a cab, while there were living people in the rooms across the passage, I was shut into this room with the other world striving to conquer me. How, I could not explain; and for what end, I did not know. If the strain continued long, I should not be able to breathe. Making a great effort, I sprang to my feet and made a dash for the door. Before my hand was upon the handle, the Presence was between the door and me, and I was beaten back to where I had been standing; and now, shaken and weakened, I waited another wrestle. When suddenly there crept into my mind the idea that this Presence was not really hostile, but was contending for me to gain some end which was not my destruction. Could it be that McKinnon was acting on me from the other side?—and the moment that I thought of him the deadly fear began to lift. He had sinned openly before us all, and he had sinned grievously in a way we had not known; but the soul within him was not bad, and the power of McKinnon—if he had any power—would not be for death. As I was thinking, I was left untouched, as if it understood that I was trying to understand. What ailed him, and what could he want? What was there that I could do for him? And Heaven knows that if I could serve McKinnon, I would, if only for his repentance and his agony. Morag was beyond my help, and yet it must have something to do with her in whom McKinnon's soul was bound up. Perhaps it was the letter, and I opened my closed fist and found the letter there crushed into a ball. As I looked at it and gently unfolded it, the Presence seemed again to enfold me—but how feeble words are to bring out the experience!—now it was with a persuasive and informing touch. It was the letter, and then in an instant I understood. I had broken upon the secret that was between the man and woman, and having done so thoughtless a deed, the letter might yet fall into others' hands, and the trust of Morag be broken. They were both on the other side; and while this letter lived, their story on





"The Presence seemed to gather round my head with a caress."



this side was not closed. All the time I was looking at the letter in my hand, and the Presence was around me. The fire was still burning, for I had been cold that evening and had built it high. As I moved a step towards the fireplace—now it seemed as if I were being led and urged—I knelt down, and then I touched the letter with my lips, as doing homage to a woman's faithful love, and thrust it into the heart of the red fire; and as I did so the Presence seemed to gather

round my head with a caress. I leapt to my feet and cried aloud: 'Forgive me, Angus McKinnon; I thought not what I did!' I was alone in the room again, and the soul of Angus McKinnon was at rest.

"When Miss McKittrick came in, I thanked her for her courtesy and thoughtfulness, but did not tell her what had happened in that room thirty years before, and the scene I had rehearsed in her little drawing-room."



THE TRYST.

*From a drawing by St. Clair Simmons.*



# UNSOLVED.

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

## No. IV.—THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE.

"IT was my good fortune," said the barrister, when his turn came to tell a story, "to spend my summer holidays in the days of youth at a Perthshire farmhouse which stood among hills where the plain of Strathmore begins to rise into the Grampians. There was a little river to fish, and half-a-dozen burns where a boy could catch trout with his hand, and moors across which he could ride on his pony, and an endless change of scene, from helping with the harvest to going out to the shooters on the Twelfth, from gathering together a herd of Highland cattle on the hill—who had to be very delicately handled—to visiting a tinker's encampment among the broom, where the man repaired pots and pans, and the woman told fortunes. But the glory and inexhaustible attraction of the place was an old castle which by that time had fallen into ruins, and for which no one cared, and therefore it was at all times at the disposal of a lad in whom the spirit of romance, fed by Scott and Fenimore Cooper, was beginning to stir. Some fighting laird on the border line between the Highlands and the Lowlands, who never knew when the Caterans would come over the moor from the glens above and raid the cattle he had fed for the Southern markets, had chosen the site with care. Upon two sides there was a deep little glen, with a burn running at the foot and some fine old trees on the slopes, and here the cattle of the district could be sheltered in time of danger. On the top of the steep side of the glen the castle stood, and the land sloped away from it down to a river, and beyond the river it rose again into a little plain which in the olden times was covered with wood. When I could not fish any more, and nothing was doing on the moor, then I spent my afternoons in the castle or wandering about the den, and, as boys will do about the age of sixteen, I reconstructed the history of the past; and that, I suppose, explains what happened, or rather, it explains

how I lay open to the impression which I suggest was in the atmosphere of the place.

"It was not difficult to rebuild the castle, which had been a fortified house of four floors, with no windows on the lower floor, only portholes, with projecting turrets at two of the four corners, and most likely a range of low houses for horses and servants, with an arched gateway completing the square. If one climbed carefully to the second floor, he could trace a dining-hall, with its huge fireplace and row of windows; and, looking up, he could see the remains of a little bedroom which opened into a turret; and once, when no one was by to damp my daring, I managed to reach this bedroom, and looking through the turret window, could see across the plain on the other side of the river, and imagined how one might signal to a house in the distance.

"That afternoon I not only rebuilt the castle, but I also tenanted it with a laird who had been out in the Fifteenth, and was going out in the Forty-Five—having for the time come to terms with the Caterans on the basis of a common love for the Stuarts and a common hatred of all governments. I gave him a handsome wife, who was the daughter of a Highland chief; and being in a generous mood, I enriched him with a beautiful daughter, whose love story I intended to work out after I had settled the history of the family and thoroughly furnished the house. About sons I was not certain, but was inclined to allow them one, who would distinguish himself greatly at the Battle of Preston Pans; but his career was also reserved. There were traces of fish-ponds on the southern slope, and the remains of a garden; and after filling the ponds and laying out the garden on a generous scale, I gave my attention to a special corner under the castle wall where there still lingered the relics of a pleasure. There could be no doubt this was the lady's own particular garden, for there were wild rose bushes and plants of thyme, and a yew tree, which had no doubt once been carefully trimmed, and also a fine old birch, beneath whose shade I

\* Copyright, 1903, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



placed a seat. Sitting there in imagination, one could look down into the den, and hear the water running over the stones, and see cattle among the trees, just as they had been herded there for fear of raiders; the flowers were blooming, and outside this sanctuary the pigeons were cooing at their dovecote. Through an opening in the yew hedge one could see the afternoon sun shining on the fish-ponds. From the open window of the hall above I heard the clash of swords, and knew that the laird and his son were fencing, and from the high turret of my young lady's room streamed out a Jacobite song. I was so pleased with my creation that I determined to complete the work while at it; and as it is tiresome to invent when you are standing, I went round the corner of the old birch tree and lay down on the grass. I shut my eyes, that I might better see what was within; and so it came to pass with me what happens to other people when they close their eyes in order to hear the sermon better and be relieved from the distractions of the outer world, I fell asleep.

"When I awoke—although, of course, this is an ambiguity of language—the sun had long been westering, and it was dusk round the old castle. How it came to pass, I did not think then and need not speculate now, but the scene had, as it were, grown and filled up, so that I was saved any more need for romancing. The trees in the den were smaller than when I fell asleep, but there were more of them, and the cattle were not as large nor as well bred as my good farmer's cows, but of them also there were more. As I looked round the corner of the birch, I saw the sweetest of little gardens, completely shut in by a high hedge, well stocked with flowers, chiefly white roses. In the garden there was a little summer-house, hidden under the castle wall and covered with ivy, so cunningly concealed that two people, at least, might meet there, and no one in the castle be any the wiser. There was a stir of life about the place, although everything was rougher and more common than I had imagined my ancient keep to be, except the garden, which, with its flowers and well-kept border, proved that one of the family had feeling and good taste. The voices that came from the courtyard were loud and rough, and through the hedge, although I did see the fish-pond, I also, by another opening, caught a glimpse of a huge manure-heap, which could not be far from the front door of the castle. The windows of the room above my head were certainly

glazed, but several of the panes were broken and some were repaired with wood. There were no dainty hangings, and someone had hung his coat outside to dry in the sunshine, which was now rapidly dying away. Only men's voices came from the room, with a strong, coarse accent; and I was certain that my idea of cavaliers, daintily dressed, sitting in an oak-panelled room drinking a health to the King over the water, would be rudely dispelled if I climbed up the ivy and looked in upon the Laird of Kinnochtry. As a matter of fact, I not only did not climb, but I was not able to move from my hiding-place beneath the birch tree. I was held there as by a spell, seeing everything and entering into everything, but unable to say a word or lift a hand. From the beginning I knew that something was going to happen, and that it would be terrible to behold, but that I should have no part nor lot in the matter. I was now present with one consciousness at some date in the eighteenth century, and looking upon life in my old castle as it used to be; but with my other consciousness I was in the nineteenth century—a lad who fished in the burn beneath and had made his own romances about the castle. And, in passing—though, of course, in those days I did not work the idea out—is it not possible to be with one consciousness in one century and one place, and with the other consciousness in another century and in another place? And may it not be possible—and I will not trouble you further with any other speculation—for the atmosphere round one to be so charged with tragic events that they may become visible to a person in a susceptible state, as secret writing contained on paper can be flung out when exposed to heat? Even as I stood, I felt like two people, and the one of the nineteenth century was disappointed and disgusted with the sight of the courtyard, and a slatternly woman crossing the manure-heap, and that most unromantic garment hanging on the wall, and the remains of food cast out from the window upon the grass near my tree. But if romance be love and war, I should have enough before all was done.

"The voices ceased in the dining-room, and a minute later I heard them in the courtyard ordering the horses to be brought, and announcing a journey to Blair, where the Lairds of Balhousie and Craighall, together with other drinking worthies of the district, were to hold a carouse for the night. An old man, short in stature, but strongly built, clad in hodden grey, with riding boots.



and armed with a sword at his waist, I took to be Kinnochtry himself; and the young man, taller and slighter, but also powerful, who was armed with a lighter sword and was rather more fashionably dressed, I concluded was the young laird. They told someone whom I could not see, but took to be a serving-man, that he need not expect them home that night; and riding away, they

that young Kinnochtry was singing 'The Bonnie Earl of Murray.'

"Ye Hielands and ye Lawlands,  
Oh! whar hae ye been?  
They have slain the Earl of Murray,  
And hae laid him on the green.

Now wae be to ye, Huntly,  
And wherefore did ye sae?  
I bad you bring him wi' you,  
But forbad you him to slay.



"Dinna let mair  
blood be shed."

left a charge that the keep be securely locked before night fell, and a good watch be kept, lest any Highland limmer should creep into the den and steal the cattle. I listened till the sound of their horses' feet died away in the distance, and I marked

And the last I heard coming back to the keep on the quiet evening air was :—

"Oh! lang will his lady  
Luke ower the castle Dune,  
Ere she sees the Earl of Murray  
Come sounding throw the towne.



"There seemed to me such a ring of satisfaction and of triumph in the singing that I was haunted with fear of some tragedy, and wondered whether the Highland Caterans were watching on the moor above, and would seize the chance to spoil the castle while the Laird and his son were drinking in Blair to the health of the King across the water.

"Another voice began to sing, and this time it was a woman's, but the song was one I did not know and was full of sadness. I looked up to discover whence it came, and I saw a young woman lean out from a turret window and look down on the courtyard and the garden and the den, either to see whether someone was there whom she wished to meet, or to be sure that no one was looking. She withdrew her head, and next time she appeared she held in her hand something like a small white sheet. Once more she reconnoitred, and now I understood that she did not wish to be observed; and when everything seemed safe, for I did not count beneath the birch—indeed, I did not count at all in the incident—she lifted the sheet in her two hands and waved it as one waves a flag. Once, and then at intervals, twice and thrice; and then she withdrew, and for a little I heard the wail, for it was rather that than a song. A few minutes afterwards her voice died into silence, and all was quiet except for the lowing of the cattle in the dens and the cooing of the pigeons as they went to rest. And the sun was now westering fast. The water sang a pleasant song beneath, and all Nature spoke of peace, yet I knew something was going to happen. For whom had the young woman signalled? What did it mean, if she had waited till her father and brother were gone? Would he come, whoever he was? and was he her lover? and if he came, would he be discovered by the serving-folk? And was it certain that Kinnochtry and his son had really gone to Blair? I did not like their loud announcements, and I thought that an ill-omened song which young Kinnochtry had chosen.

"As I was speculating and putting things together, the young woman came round the corner of the castle into her garden; and after glancing up at the windows, she entered into the summer-house and sat down with a sigh which I could hear where I stood. She was simply dressed in some dark-coloured cloth, and had a white silk kerchief on her neck and bosom, and her only ornament was the Jacobite badge of the white briar rose which she wore at her breast and also in her

hair, for she was bareheaded. She was like her brother, tall and slight, but handsomer than either father or brother, and more refined, with fair hair touched by gold and coming down low on the forehead. Her eyes were grey and faithful, her lips full and rich, and her whole expression bore witness to an affectionate, trustful, kindly disposition; but she seemed pained and fearful, as of one whose joy in life had been dashed, and over whom hung the shadow of some calamity. And I, boy though I was, was so taken with her gentleness and her contrast to everyone else about the place that I should have liked to have asked what ailed her, and to have told her that in me she had at least one faithful knight. Within the summer-house she began to sing; and though I did not then know the ballad, I have identified it since, and among all the songs of Scotland there is none so sad.

"O Waly! Waly! up yon bank,  
And Waly! Waly! down yon brae;  
And Waly! by yon river's side  
Where my love and I was wont to gae.

Waly! Waly! gin love be bonny  
A little while when it is new;  
But when it's auld, it waxes cauld,  
And wears away like morning dew.

I leant my back unto an aik,  
I thought it was a trusty tree;  
But first it bowed and sine it brake,  
And sae did my fause love to me.

O Martinmas wind, when wilt thou blaw,  
And shake the green leaves off the tree?  
O gentle death, when wilt thou come,  
And take a life that wearies me?

"Still singing, or rather crooning, she came out of the summer-house and went to the edge of the den, and looked down to see if anyone were coming; and then she suddenly started and looked back with an expression of keen alarm upon her face. Someone was coming from the courtyard. She hesitated for a moment, once more searched the den to see if he were there, and then turned round and walked across the little garden to the opening in the yew tree hedge, and stood face to face with the Laird, her father. As I suspected, the crafty pair had not ridden far, and now the father had come stealthily back to catch his daughter as she met her lover. And the son? He could not be far off. Had he gone to take the lover in hand?

"'Weel, lassie,' and Kinnochtry's voice was charged with cold scorn, 'ye seem surprised to see me back, and no mightily pleased. I expected a warmer welcome when your brother and me gave up a night at Blair



wi' some of the richt side to keep ye company. Were ye no feered to be left alone wi' nothin' but a deaf auld wife in the castle and a man that ye've sent away on an errand to the muir? Ye have a brave heart, lassie, to keep hoose by yersel' when there's so many queer folk about.' And he fixed his daughter with a merciless eye, while she grew red and then white before him and, visibly

ing that we love him aither; no, I'll no say that your brother and me love the Laird of Auchterhouse—was coming to pay a call this evening to Kinnochtry. It's no the first time that the folk of Auchterhouse have visited Kinnochtry, for if ye'll tak the trouble to come round the corner of the keep, I'll show you the verra spot where old Auchterhouse fell shot dead by my father

thirty-five year ago. That was the last call he made here. And this man's elder brother stabbed your uncle in Blair market in open daylight. It was three months after that he was buried himsel', and I didna attend the funeral; but had it no been for me, and this guid sword by my side, there would hae been no funeral to attend.' Marjorie clung to the hedge, but said never a word, fascinated by her father's grim face and cold-blooded irony.

"We're Christians, lassie, baptised in the kirk, and regular attenders when there's no other job on hand; but releegeion has limitations, and your brother and me have no been hankering to see the Laird o' Auchterhouse at Kinnochtry. At ony rate, if he was to call, we judged it better for our hoose, besides being more polite, lassie—and your brother and me are no without our manners—that we should be present to

receive him and to gie him the welcome he deserves.' And Kinnochtry's last words cut the air like a sword.

"We've been telt—but ye'll correct me, Marjorie, if I'm wrang, for ye're a truthful daughter in word and deed—that this is no the first time Auchterhouse has paid his respects, and I'm judgin' he was astonished there was no man to receive him. It's been an oversicht, but we'll mak up for that the nicht.



"I met him fishing, and he spoke to me."

trembling, reached out her hand to the hedge for support.

"No doubt ye're wondering, Marjorie, what changed our minds and made your brother and me so anxious about your safety. It was a bit of news we got, and I'll no deny it has touched us close. A wee bird came and whispered in our ears that a neighbour from across the river wha has hated us as his forebears did afore him—and I'm no say-



It was a pity that he didna come in the day-time instead of the gloaming, and didna come round by the front gate as his father did. I dinna say he would have likit the company better, but there would have been more to meet him, and I'm thinkin' he would have stayed longer. But we'll do oor best, Marjorie, me and your brother, to make up for the past.'

"His daughter, who had been withering under her father's terrible face, recovered herself at the last suggestion and looked fearfully down the garden. When she saw her brother standing at the foot, where there was a piece of sward, and peering down the den through some bushes which hid him from the sight of anyone approaching, she threw herself down at her father's feet and caught him by the knees.

"'Have mercy, father!' she cried; 'have mercy, and I'll confess all! But dinna let mair blood be shed; for surely, surely there's been enough black trouble between Kinnochtry and Auchterhouse. It's no his blame; it's mine. I was lonely in this auld place with neither mother nor sister, and you and James aye awa'. I wearied, and I met him fishing on the river, and he spoke to me; and, father, they were the first kind words I ever had from a man of oor ain rank. He was gentle and pleasant wi' me, and I know that I shouldna have let him come in secret to Kinnochtry; but I loved him, and I kent ye would never look upon his face in peace. We have sinned, and I confess it; but for my mother's sake spare him and me!' But when she looked up at her father's face, she saw no sign of relenting.

"'Auchterhouse is coming here the nicht. I dinna deny it, though wha telt ye I'll no ask. Call back James, father, and let me meet Auchterhouse, and he'll never come here again in secret, I'll give ye my word. Have pity on James, if ye have none on the other, for one o' them'll fall; and have pity on me, for I'll be the cause o' the death. Will ye let me go, father?' and she sprang to her feet and laid her hands on Kinnochtry's arm.

"'Na, na, lassie; ye have gone aince too often, if a' tales be true, to meet Auchterhouse, and ye'll never go again. I wouldna say but there might be some words atween Auchterhouse and yir brother; but it's no for me to interfere; and by my soul, Marjorie,' said Kinnochtry fiercely, 'it's no you that'll come atween them!'

"As he spoke, Kinnochtry took his daughter in his arms and carried her across to the

summer-house and placed her there; and then, standing at the door with her shut in behind him, he asked his son if their visitor was coming, and James signalled with his hand to be quiet.

"There was no sound in the garden, save a low sobbing from the summer-house, and then a minute later the bushes parted from the edge of the den, and Auchterhouse came through and stood face to face with young Kinnochtry. The light was fading fast, but there was enough wherein to see the men, and enough for Kinnochtry's purpose. One could understand at a glance the fascination which young Auchterhouse had in the eyes of Marjorie, for he had been abroad, and was more a gallant than the men of her family. So far as the face of him and his dress went, he was a lover of whom no girl need be ashamed, yet from my birch tree I liked not the expression of his eye nor the sneer upon his lips. I judged, with the instinct of a lad, that there was no pity in him either for man or woman; and while my heart bled for Marjorie, I could not wish success to Auchterhouse.

"It was young Kinnochtry that spoke first, and it was plain he had not the control of his father. 'Ye didna expect to meet me, or ony other man here, my lad, when ye cam wi' yir false face like a fox in the gloaming to steal yir game. Ye thought to meet a foolish lassie whose heart ye wiled by yir lyin' tongue; and it's a kiss ye were expectin', but, by the God that made us, it's the end o' a sword ye get.'

"Auchterhouse glanced once at Kinnochtry, and in that instant he caught the sound of the crying, and then he looked the brother up and down with mockery on his face.

"'My certes,' he said, with an accent half Scots and half Southern, 'I was not looking for the pleasure of meeting the whole family of Kinnochtry in one little garden, for I heard that the Laird and you were trysted at Blair this very night. Our houses have had some coming and going in past days not altogether friendly, I believe, and I might not have had the courage to come across the river to pay my respects at Kinnochtry had I not been invited.'

"'You black liar!' cried young Kinnochtry, drawing his sword; and when I saw what an unredeemed scoundrel Auchterhouse was, though all the time I pitied Marjorie, I hoped that he would be killed.

"'Hardly that, my blunt, straightforward neighbour,' and Auchterhouse had now his hand upon his sword. 'When a fair lady in-





"Her father passed his sword time after time through the body of this worst enemy of his house,"



vites a gentleman to visit her, and the letter is writ so large it can be seen a mile off, I ask yourself whether he is not bound to come, and all the more when she has been——

“Before he could say another word his sword was out and they were busy at work, while the Laird stood in the summer-house door and the girl lay behind. Young Kinnochtry was the stronger man and a good swordsman, but he was furious in his rage, and had, therefore, the less command of his weapon. The other was as cold as ice and as venomous as a serpent, and was evidently a cunning fencer. For a while he stood on his defence, parrying the fierce attack, and then he began on his part to respond. Kinnochtry stepped forward from the doorway and was plainly anxious, although he gave no sign of interference. There was a clash of swords, with rapid motions which I could not follow, and young Kinnochtry’s sword flew out of his hand, and he stood at the mercy of Auchterhouse, who seemed to hesitate for a second before he passed his sword through him. During that second Marjorie, who, unheeded by all, had escaped from the summer-house, flung herself between the combatants, and ere anyone could hinder it, her lover’s sword found its home in her

breast. She fell, in face of her father, between her lover and brother, without a word except a cry for mercy. The sound had not died away, and Auchterhouse’s sword had not been withdrawn from the heart he had twice pierced, before Kinnochtry had run him through, and he fell dead beside Marjorie. Her brother stood motionless and paralysed, but her father passed his sword time after time, three times in all, through the body of this worst enemy of his house.

“‘God’s curse on you in this world and in that which is to come! Take his carcass, James, and throw it into the den, and send word to Auchterhouse that they can come and fetch their Laird.’ He lifted up his daughter, and I saw him carry her through the opening in the hedge; and he did not weep, but I heard him say: ‘It was better this way for herself and for our name.’ As she passed through, her hair, which had loosened, caught in the hedge. He gently disentangled it, and I caught him repeating her name twice: ‘Marjorie, Marjorie.’ I tried to follow him, and in the trying I awoke. It was almost dark, and the garden was again deserted and in ruins; but nothing will ever convince me after all the years that it had not seen that tragedy.”





# UNSOLVED.

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

No. V.—GHOSTLY COUNSEL.



WHEN it came to Parker's turn to tell his experience in the smoking-room, he showed some desire to cancel the contract and to escape his obligation, which was most unbecoming

conduct in our only man of business.

"You see," he explained, "I am not a soldier who has had adventures, or a writing man who has got imagination: till five years ago I was a corn merchant in Liverpool, and spent my time in the rather exciting but also very prosaic occupation of buying wheat if I thought it was going to rise, and selling it if I thought it was going to fall. My capital was not large, and the market was apt to play the fool with the wisest—my wisdom was not monumental—so that from time to time I had bad luck, and once at least I was in a tight place. If it came to adventures on the market, and the romance of success and failure in speculation, I could tell some rather interesting yarns; but the Corn Exchange does not suggest the Unseen Universe. I think our only point of contact with the supernatural is our futures, which are sometimes shadowy enough, and occasionally haunt a man with far more terror than any ghost."

"Quite so, Parker," said our host: "but you left corn, and you have been living in that country house of yours, which looks like a hotel for ghosts, with its secret staircase in the wall, its hidden door in the panels, those lonely rooms in the tower, and that vault beneath the dining-room. Come now, own up. Has not some laird of the past dropped in when things were quiet, to see what kind of man had succeeded him? Has nothing happened at Glasclune?"

"Nothing," said Parker, "I give you my word; and I confess that I am rather disap-

pointed, for I thought that some antique of the past with a troubled conscience would have turned up to confess his sin and add a fancy value to the old castle. The place is absolutely unromantic, in spite of its holes and corners, and my life, after the excitement of the Corn Market, has sunk into dead commonplace. Golf in the daytime, and a little shooting in season, and in the evening I potter among my books and engravings, which were always my by-occupation. Very uneventful really; I think you had better call on the doctor."

"Well," said the barrister, "if you have nothing to tell, it's not your blame, and we don't want barefaced inventions; but country houses have not got a monopoly of ghosts. Some curious things have happened in London chambers, or else two or three of my friends have been uncommon liars, and I have often wondered if nothing strange occurred in those gloomy piles of mercantile offices. I remember when I was on circuit at Liverpool going down late one night to have a blow on the landing-stage after getting up a very heavy brief, and I was struck, as I came back through your corn street, with its solitude and weirdness. There did not seem to be a soul living in the whole quarter, and I could see passages opening into courts behind, and black entries where there might be all kinds of shadowy figures. I went down one passage and found myself in a well with offices rising up high on every side, a few hours ago full of life, and now silent as the grave. Then suddenly a light was turned on in a room on the third floor, and the eeriness of the situation was complete. Was it a burglar who was trying the safe and felt secure in that lonely place at that early hour of the morning? Or was it a merchant who had grown uneasy about his accounts, and had come down to see whether he were solvent or bankrupt? Or was it some cashier who was manipulating the books and carrying on a cunning fraud? Or was it a merchant who had died years ago and was drawn back to the scene of his former business? Do you know, I've never forgotten the impression as

\* Copyright, 1903, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



I stood in that court with its dim light—for the moon, which had been faintly shining on the river, had gone under a heavy cloud—and looked up to that room, with its mysterious occupant. But I beg your pardon. This is not 'my funeral,' as the Americans say; I've told my story already. Seriously, though, does nothing ever happen in those offices except contracts, and does nothing come in except sample-bags?"

Barristers have certainly got a way of extracting the truth, and that turned out to be a very successful cross-examination, in a quite informal fashion, for whatever might be the reason, Parker was distinctly caught by the graphic night scene and surrendered suddenly at discretion.

"No wonder," said Parker, looking at the barrister resentfully, "that witnesses break down when you take them in hand, for your way of touching on other people's secrets comes near to witchcraft. Well, it was not churlishness that kept me silent, or any suspicion that you would give me away, but simply that the story I must now tell is quite incredible, and you will be entitled to conclude either that my brain was heated through the anxiety of a business crisis, or that I had been asleep and dreamt what I supposed happened. The only evidence beyond my own testimony that I can bring forward is Glasclune and my retirement from business; for I had never blossomed from a struggling corn merchant into a modest Scots laird had it not been for a midnight experience in that very quarter the barrister so graphically described, and a certain visitor.

"Personal biography is of no use for our purpose; but if it won't bore you, I had better tell you my history and explain the state of affairs when the incident happened.

My father and mother died in my childhood, and I was brought up by a guardian, with whom I lived through my boyhood, but who left Liverpool and ceased to have any responsibility for me when I came of age. As I did not know what I wanted to be, and only found out when it was too late that the one thing I cared for was the Army, my guardian, in the plenitude of his wisdom, apprenticed me to a firm of corn merchants, because, as he said, with consider-



"I'll start you with a thousand pounds."

able common sense, people will always want bread, and there must be corn merchants to import the material. Five years I served my time, and I came to know every turn in the rabbit-warren of offices, and something about most of the firms. When my time was up, the firm, which managed to do a large business on an economical working staff of a cashier, a book-keeper, an office boy, and seven apprentices, gave me to understand that in allowing me the run of their office, and securing from me at least



three years' good clerk work, they had done all which an enterprising firm of corn merchants could be expected to do for an apprentice, and that I must secure a situation for myself. As no situation turned up after six months' waiting, and I was now in possession of my very moderate inheritance, my guardian suggested that I should start in business for myself, and secure a senior partner who had large experience and no capital. For three years we worked together, and at the close it had come to pass that I had a very considerable amount of experience and he had all the capital. Our partnership was then dissolved, and he took what business there was into another firm, where he flourished still more abundantly, and I was left to look after myself.

"I could not start business on my own account without capital, and no one seemed particularly anxious to have me as a servant—at least, there was no frantic enthusiasm in that direction—and had it not been for a certain strange character in the corn market I would have emigrated, or, if I had not been too old, would have enlisted in a cavalry regiment. But one day, as I was hanging about the street feeling very much down on my luck, someone gripped my arm, and I found myself in the clutches of Mr. James Peebles, only partner in the firm of Peebles and Company, who described themselves as corn brokers, and had been about forty years on the market. Mr. Peebles, or 'Jimmy,' as he was known by everybody, and called by most people to his face, was a Scotsman of extraordinary keenness and equal penuriousness, was unmarried, lodged in two rooms somewhere, dined on a shilling a day, and had amassed a large fortune, which it was understood would be carefully and justly divided, with remarkable provisions against squandering, among a clan of relatives in the hard-headed county of Fife. He was dressed, as usual, in the shabby grey suit of antique cut, which it is certain he had worn for ten years, and without which he could hardly have been recognised in the City, and had the familiar stick in his left hand, for he was slightly lame, with which he tapped himself up and down stairs, in and out of offices, and through the Corn Exchange. The sound of the stick was the signal that 'Jimmy' was coming, and he used the stick to emphasise his points as he laid down the law on 'futures.' For 'Jimmy' was not really a broker going between merchants, nor was he a merchant himself, but he was a pure, unadulterated speculator, naked and not

ashamed. He had one factotum in his office, another Scot called Morrison—a fierce theologian—almost as curious as himself, who kept the office open and managed such books as 'Jimmy' required; and 'Jimmy' never wanted to see any corn, and never really possessed any except on paper. He bought for the rise and he sold for the fall; he made his money between the turn of the markets, and his foresight was almost superhuman. It did not matter what operations they were carrying on in America, or what surprises they might spring, how disordered the market at home might be, or how sluggish, 'Jimmy' had a scent for what was going to happen, and gathered gain in all kinds of weather. Many a firm in past days had tried to secure his services, and had offered him the most tempting terms, but 'Jimmy' preferred his snug little office of two rooms on the ground floor at the back of Simpson's Buildings, and his independence of speech and action.

"'Weel,' said 'Jimmy,' 'it's just about the time when I take my midday bite, and if ye have no operation in hand, and don't object to share a branded steak with an old man, we'll step round the corner to the "White Horse,"' in which ancient eating-house 'Jimmy' had filled a corner at 12.30 for more than a generation.

"'Ye've had hard times, Parker,' said 'Jimmy,' when we had broken on the steak, 'and I've been sorry for ye. I've been watchin' ye—there's not much I don't know. There was no man to guide you, and your partner was a verra clever man; mebbe too clever, as he'll find some day. Your money's gone, I am judgin', and you've nothing to start with—just so! Weel, I like your appearance, and I count that you've more brains than they think on the street, though mebbe not so much as your late partner, who has one of the biggest low-class second-rate brains I've ever lighted on. I want to make a proposeetion to you,' and 'Jimmy' was so expansive that he broke his usual rule of never drinking anything, intoxicating or non-intoxicating, except water, and ordered two bottles of barm beer.

"'Naebody knows what I'm going to tell you, and ye will be pleased to keep it quiet, but I've resolved to give up business and go back to Fife, for the doctor tells me my course is run. Morrison retires at the same time; and he's settling down at Auchtermuchty, where he'll give them trouble in the Kirk, if I'm no mistaken, for the rest of his natural life; and, as ye know, there's no business to dispose of. Na, na! The busi-



ness of James Peebles and Company begins and ends with me and Morrison, and the office is no what ye call palatial, but it was enough for me, and I've a lease o' it for five year. I've never believed in charity, for it just helps wastrels, and if ye want a kirk ye must go to Scotland; but I've taken a notion of doing one good deed before I retire—both ways, you know; it will be my last "future."

"By this time I was listening with amazement to 'Jimmy's' announcement, and imagining the excitement on the market when 'Jimmy' closed his last account.

"What I have to propose is this. That ye take over the office at the present rent, which is moderate, and that ye do what business ye can, buyin' or sellin' as ye judge the wind to be blowin', for brokin' is only scrapin'; and a merchant—it's no use without a big capital; and Parker, my man, ye'll say nothing about it to any livin' soul, for every hospital in Liverpool'll be after me afore I get out of the city, but I'll start you with a thousand pounds."

"Within three months I was established in 'Jimmy's' office, with a young lad as my solitary staff, and was trying my hand with 'futures.' Unfortunately it was one thing to succeed to 'Jimmy's' room, and another thing to be heir to his acuteness, and before the year was over I had lost most of my little capital and began to be in deep water. The market was in that state that if a man really could discover—which he must do by instinct—which way the tide was going to run, he could make a fortune. It seemed to me as if I were more likely to lose the few hundreds that were still left. One day I took my courage in both hands and bought heavily, so that I stood either to win several thousand pounds or to be hopelessly bankrupt. As I sat alone in my rooms that evening I fell into a panic, and indeed, I may frankly tell you men, I've never had either the nerve or the brain for the corn business, and you will understand to-night how I've come out so well. As I knew that I could not sleep, and as I had in my office a mass of papers containing reports of the American harvest, and statistics of the corn held in store there, and prophecies of the demands and supplies throughout the world, and such-like material on which speculators work, I determined about eleven o'clock to go down to the office and thresh out as best I could the question of policy. The corn quarter was certainly a lonely place when I arrived about twenty minutes to twelve, and I almost hesitated to go into the office; but I

laughed at myself as I unlocked the door, for there is not a safer place, or a quieter, than an office at midnight where there is no jewelry to rob, and no securities worth having. I sat down at my table, and now I shall describe the place as far as is necessary. It consisted of two rooms, both looking upon the court behind. One room opened into a passage leading to the street, and was the office; my room opened out of that, and it had a door into another passage, but this I never used, and it was permanently locked. From where I sat I could see the court in daylight, and the footsteps of anyone crossing were quite clear and, indeed, resonant. For a little I felt ill at ease, for no other reason than simply the remembrance that there was not a human being in all the buildings round; but after I had settled down to my work and had finished a comparison between the visible stock of corn in February of that year and the amount in February of the year before, and had fairly plunged into the ratio between the stock of corn and the price of corn in the different years at the same date, I was quite indifferent whether the offices round me were full or empty. I had just laid down my pencil in order to digest the figures when . . . there was a crash in the outer office, the door of which was open and into which from where I sat I could not look. What could have happened in a room which was certainly empty and a moment before was as still as death? I crossed the floor, scratching a match as I did so, for I could not afford to have electric light, which was then being introduced. Certainly there was no one in the room. When I lit the gas, the explanation of the noise was evident: a large book in which my lad had been pasting extracts from trade journals, and which he had left on a standing desk, had taken in its head to move, and after, I suppose, some futile attempts during the evening, had succeeded with the effect of a demonstration at half past twelve. Why a book which has lain quiet for several hours will at last make for the floor, and why books do not stay still, but are perpetually in motion, is a problem I have never solved. My experience of books is that unless you have them securely fastened, they can't be kept quiet. I locked that book up in a cupboard and went back to my figures; but the interruption had shaken my nerves, and I was conscious of listening, and as soon as you begin to listen at half past twelve in an empty building, you are bound to hear something. One minute it was the gurgling of a water-pipe which seemed to be chortling



over my anxiety ; another it was the scurrying of some mice which had got in from a neighbouring sample-room ; the third it was the moaning of the wind through a ventilator, which was, of course, bewailing my approaching downfall ; and the fourth it was the closing of a door which had been left open



"Someone was certainly crossing the court."

in some cellar, and whose clang echoed up from below.

"Better to go back to work and finish my calculations, then a walk home through the keen winter air to brace me up. Really, I said to myself, I am getting childish, for now I started at the sound of a step in the passage into which the outer office opened, and jumped out of the chair when

there came a loud and imperious knock on the outer office door. Who could be in Simpson's Buildings at this preposterous hour, and what did he want with me ? When the knock came again, I went through the office, and standing carefully within the locked door, demanded 'Who is there ?' 'Open the door !' was the answer, with the addition 'Police,' and in an instant I was face to face with a constable, lamp in hand, who had seen the light at the unusual hour and wished to be sure that no mischief was being done. When I had satisfied him with thanks for his vigilance and a trifle for his trouble, and his steps had died away across the court down an opposite passage, I felt more nervous than ever, and lonelier. Hurriedly finishing my review, and leaving it for the open air to decide upon my course next day, I had risen to put on my coat, when I heard coming, as far as I could judge, through the passage by which the constable had left, and entering upon the court, a step I knew well, which indeed was different to any other man's. It was not only the sound of a foot, but the tap of a stick. Was my mind failing, or had sitting in 'Jimmy's' office filled me with imaginations, for I could have sworn by the sound that 'Jimmy' was again among his old haunts ? Under an irresistible impulse, I turned out the gas and went over to the window. Someone, and that was all I could see, was certainly crossing the court in the direction of our office, and the tapping grew every moment more distinct.

"Why, of course, it would be 'Jimmy.' Three days before I had written to him and asked him his opinion of the market, for although he communicated with no person and did no business, but was understood to be working a small farm, I knew he received every paper and report in the department of corn, and that the old warrior would always keep his eye on the battlefield. I was careful not to tell him that I was anxious, lest he should think that I was simply begging, but simply gave him news and invited any suggestions he might make. He had not replied, and I was beginning to conclude that he did not wish to take any responsibility. I was not astonished, for 'Jimmy' was not likely to involve himself





“Go on selling till ye hear that Jeffrey of Chicago has begun to buy.”



in a hazardous campaign with which he had nothing to do, but I did feel that after his kindness he might have given me a word of advice. I had done the old man an injustice, for now it was plain that instead of writing, he had come up in person to Liverpool and, no doubt in keeping with his policy of secrecy, had arrived by the last train about twelve o'clock. Then having learned at my rooms where I had gone, for I had told my landlady lest she should be alarmed, he had been nothing loth to follow me down to the old place. He was just the man to enjoy a visit *incognito*, and I felt grateful for his trouble. All this flashed through my mind as the dim figure crossed the court, and before the tapping had actually come to our side, I had reached the office door to bid 'Jimmy' welcome; but when I opened it, there was no one in the passage. I looked up and down: no 'Jimmy.' I went out to the court: no sound there, and so far as I could see, no person. Then I went back to the office, and when I entered my room, the first sight I saw was 'Jimmy' sitting in his own chair at the table. Of course, I had forgotten the door from the other passage into the private room, and I remembered now that 'Jimmy' used to reach his room that way when he did not wish to show himself on the market, lest he should be questioned, and in order that Morrison, who 'tasted' freely but told no lies, might be able to say that he was not in. He was dressed in the old suit and looked haggard, as if fatigued by his long journey, and he did not encourage any salutations, but plunged at once into business.

"Your letter came when I was—engaged, and I did not get free till to-day, and now I've come to tell you to sell to-morrow and go on selling till ye hear that Jeffrey of Chicago has begun to buy. Close your accounts then, laddie, and ye'll be a rich man. Bring me your books."

"When I returned into the office with the ledger, 'Jimmy' was gone, having left by the private door, of which he had evidently kept a key, and which he had locked after him. When I hurried round by the other passage, I could not find him in the court; and when I

went through to the street, he was not there. There were many ways by which he could elude me; and when next morning he did not appear at my lodgings, I was not greatly surprised, for it would only be like 'Jimmy' to come and go in mystery. I followed his advice during the day, and in the evening stood to win a considerable sum, for the market still was falling. Before I went to bed I wrote him a grateful letter, thanking him for his infallible advice, but scolding him for not letting me thank him, and the morning following I received a letter from Morrison which I can give *verbatim*.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Your letter came four days ago, and was read by Mr. Peebles. He intended to answer it at once, but had a stroke two hours afterwards, and never said anything again which we could understand. We thought that he was troubled about the letter, but he could give no directions. He died last night without pain at a quarter to one, and I thought it right to inform you, as he always used to speak in kindly terms about you."

"How it came to pass, I do not know; but what came to pass, so far as I saw, I have told you, and I had so little doubt that somehow 'Jimmy' had been anxious to help me, that I continued selling on a large scale even when others were afraid to do anything, till one day news came from Chicago that Jeffrey was again a bull. From that hour I never bought or sold a single cental, but wound up my business and invested the proceeds in Glasclune and some railway stock, and am fairly comfortable."

"I ought to add that before 'Jimmy' left Liverpool we spent an evening together, and he declared his intense satisfaction with commercial life."

"I'll no deny," he summed up, "but that corn is a grand business if ye're sure how the market's going. I doubt that Pittenweem 'ill be wearisome, and I'm feared at times that I'll not be at home in the next world itself, unless I'm allowed to try just one operation." And 'Jimmy' accomplished one on the largest scale."





# UNSOLVED.

By IAN MACLAREN.\*

## No. VI.—THE HAND ON THE BLIND.

"IT is right to explain," said the doctor, when it was his turn to confess, "that I seem from childhood to have had a faculty for materialising absent persons of whom I am thinking, so that those who are present to my spirit are also present in their body. What the body may be in which they become visible, I am not going to discuss at present, for that would lead us into one of the most difficult provinces of psychical investigation, and our idea is not conferences, but experiences. Perhaps two instances will be enough to show what I mean, and may help to explain the incident which I am afterwards to tell. When I was about nine years old, it was thought expedient for some reason or other to take me from the bedroom where I slept with my younger brother, and to send me to a lonely bedroom on the highest floor, where I had not only the room, but the whole floor to myself. The room was large, it had two huge, dark cupboards running under the slates, and an opening by a trap-door to the roof, and I was terrified at the thought of the first night. Of course, I pretended that I was not afraid, and that I was awfully glad to have such a jolly big room all to myself; and then, when our old nurse had bidden me good-night, and I was left alone, I simply sweated with fear for hours, and longed, as a lad will, for my mother. If she would only come up! But then she would be in bed long ago. I would have gone down to her, but I was afraid that my father would laugh at me. If I could only let her know without any other person knowing! All this time my eyes were firmly closed, for fear of what I might see, and my head buried deep in the pillow and almost covered with bedclothes, for fear of what I might hear, when it seemed to me as if I knew that someone was in the room, and I opened my eyes to see my mother standing at the bedside and looking at me very kindly. 'How did you know, mother,' I cried, sitting up in bed, 'that I was wearying

for you?' and then, just as a lantern picture disappears from the sheet, she was gone. Within ten seconds I was out of that room and downstairs, battering at the door of the bedroom where my father and mother were sound asleep.

"Twenty years after, and when I had begun practice, I was sitting on Christmas Eve in my study, and my thoughts turned to the dearest friend and the truest I have ever had. I went to medicine and he went into the Army, where he did splendid work and died gloriously in one of our Indian wars—Mappin, of the Irregular Horse. My mind fixed itself upon him—his look as he used to sit smoking in my room, as he slogged in cricket, as he bade me good-bye when he left—and I longed with all my heart that distance were obliterated and that old Jack were beside me again. There was no noise in the room, and nothing to make me look round, but I started to my feet as if someone had been announced, and there, in the uniform of the Indian Horse, as I had him in a photograph, much browner than he used to be, and a little older, with a scar upon his cheek, but with the old gay and careless look, was Jack. 'Wherever did you come from, old man?' I cried joyfully. 'This is a trick to play' . . . but I was alone in the room. No, I know I was not dreaming, for while still standing there the telephone-bell rang at my side. Perhaps I ought to add that I did not receive a letter a few weeks afterwards saying that Jack had died at that very hour, for he was not killed for some years afterwards. It is probable, if that throws any light upon it, that, like my mother, he was sleeping at the time when, present to my thoughts, he also materialised before my eyes. And now for my experience.

"It was only in his last illness that I attended Jeremiah Wisset, and Jeremiah used to boast that up to that time he had never paid one sixpence to the medical profession, which had secured to him, he explained, two advantages in life—more money and good health. When I saw him first, which was years before he died, he was so

\* Copyright, 1903, by Rev. John Watson, in the United States of America.



thin and dry—a skeleton with a parchment stretched over it—that I do not believe any respectable and enterprising microbe with a sound appetite would have landed on such a creature. He belonged to that class of lean old men who seem to be indefinitely preserved by a drying process, so that there is no reason that they should die any more than a mummy. His practical business in life was operating in lard, and his name on the produce market was a synonym for shrewdness, capacity, courage, and hardness. By the cunning and daring of his speculations he had upset markets, ruined rivals, and made great strokes of success. Every man has a lighter side, and Jeremiah allowed himself one recreation, and that was the restoration of the lost Ten Tribes. He had received, so he would explain when not occupied with lard, special revelations that the Ten Tribes were the Afghans, and he used to confirm this remarkable idea by photographs showing the likeness between the rulers of Afghanistan and distinguished Hebrews, and also by a collection of texts from the Old Testament in which he traced distinct prophetic allusions to the customs and habits of the Afghan people. It may seem incredible that the same man who kept the lard market in a state of perpetual commotion was the president of the Afghan Restoration Society, but really every person is mad on some points. You may play upon the instrument for a long time before you touch the false note, but sooner or later it will catch your ear. One of the richest men I know, and one of the most benevolent, thinks he has a glass leg; a very successful barrister believes that he has reached a state of spiritual perfection by the special assistance of Heaven; a clergyman I often meet is convinced that any disorder among his books or papers is brought about by the active interposition of Satan; and a respectable tradesman who has amassed a competency by remnant sales will tell you the date of the end of the world, and show you the picture of the general who is to command at the battle of Armageddon. If you ask why gentlemen with such remarkable views are not locked up, I will only reply that most of them are clever enough to lock you up, and that, indeed, if you presume upon their weakness, you are very likely to be undeceived. Anyone who judged Jeremiah's mental capacity by his views on the Afghan question would have made a mistake, and one or two lard men who subscribed to the Restoration Society,

and then presumed upon the fact in the market, were very badly hurt. Jeremiah kept his relaxation strictly within bounds, and outside the Afghan question he was a silent, reserved, determined, merciless man.

"Any affection which he was capable of—and perhaps he had more heart than people knew—had been given to a nephew, of whom he sometimes spoke in moments of rare confidence to old Kinnish, his rival in lard. It was understood that if this lad had fallen in with Jeremiah's wishes, he would have been brought into the office and have been made the old man's heir; but the foolish fellow persisted in going into the Army, with only one hundred pounds of private income, and remaining in it; and Jeremiah declared to Kinnish that although Robert was his natural heir, he would leave every penny to the Society for the Restoration of the Afghans; and Kinnish, who knew better than to talk with Jeremiah about the Afghans, took a very dark view of the nephew's chances. Kinnish declared to his cronies at the club that Jeremiah was much fonder of that nephew than he would allow, and that the refusal to join him in business had hit the old man hard. Certainly he began to age visibly, and although he could not get thinner, he got weaker; and when he was stricken down one evening in his room, after an exciting day in the City, I had no doubt when I saw him that it was the beginning of the end. He lived for about a month in what I may call a state of suspended animation both of mind and body. He could hardly speak, and he never seemed to think of business; he took as much food as was given him, and fell in with any arrangement made for his comfort. The only thing he seemed to care for was to sit at the window of the room where he kept his papers and his books on the great Afghan question, and to look out of the window as if watching for someone's coming. I asked his nurse whether he ever expressed a wish to see any person, but she said 'No'; and when old Kinnish called, Jeremiah did not seem to know who he was. His nephew was with Kitchener up the Nile, and, a week before Jeremiah's stroke, had been mentioned in the despatches for a rather plucky action; and a lard man had seen Jeremiah going from paper to paper in the Exchange News-room with much interest. I asked him whether he would like me to communicate with Lieutenant (now Captain) Stokes, but Jeremiah only looked at me and shook his head; then he resumed his watch at the



window. His mind was dazed, and I came to the conclusion that he had forgotten everything, but that through his dull consciousness there stirred some affection for his nephew, and that though he did not know it, and made no response if Stokes's name was mentioned, he was feeling after him.

"One night, about ten o'clock, I was



"I know I was not dreaming."

summoned to come in haste, and was not surprised to find Jeremiah had had another shock, and that he was dying. He was speechless and helpless, but it appeared as if his mind had awakened and that he desired to say something. His eyes appealed, and it was not for any bodily relief, since the nurse was attending to every want, and I knew that he had no pain. Following, as

far as one could, the signal of his eyes, we concluded that he desired something that was not in the room, and I went into his sitting-room and looked for any book which might satisfy him. I brought in turn and held up before him, naming it as I did so, a Bible, one of his Afghan books, a bound volume of produce reports, finally a daily newspaper, believing that in this way we

might strike the thought that was in his mind. His desk was locked; but when we asked him if he wished it opened, there was no response in his eyes, and I doubted, indeed, whether, being the man that he was, he would keep anything valuable in a place that could be opened so easily. We mentioned to him clergyman, lawyer, and Peter Kin-nish, but the eyes said 'No'; then I said, 'Stokes—your nephew, Lieutenant Stokes,' and his eyes said 'Yes.' It was distinctly his nephew about whom he was thinking. And when I added—for I had forgotten his promotion—'Captain Stokes,' I saw a flash of satisfaction. He knew that his nephew was in Egypt and could not be brought

home in time, for I was now convinced that he was absolutely *compos mentis*. It was, therefore, something to do with Stokes that was troubling his mind. Was it a message that he wanted to send? The eyes were not satisfied. Was it some paper that had to do with his nephew? Then I saw that we had struck upon the truth. But Jeremiah was weakening fast, and the time



was very short. Very likely he wished to make some change in his will. I did not know whether in that state he could legally do so; but at any rate, if that was what he desired, we ought to do what we could. Again I asked him whether he wanted a lawyer sent for; but that was not his desire. Whether he wished a paper brought? Yes, that was it. Having procured his keys, I opened his American desk and began to bring bundle after bundle into the room and lay them on the bed; and his eyes looked at me in despair. Not these? No. Not there? No. Where? Then he seemed to make an effort to break the silence and tell us what he wanted and where it was, and—the cord of life snapped. He was gone, carrying his secret with him.

“When the time came to settle Jeremiah’s affairs, his lawyers produced a will which he had made two years before, and at the time when his nephew finally decided to remain in the Army. By the provisions of this will Stokes received a thousand pounds, certain hospitals received five hundred each, generous provision was made for his clerks and servants, and the remainder of his estate was left to the benefit of the Society for the Restoration of the Lost Ten Tribes—that is to say, the Afghans—to their native country; and there was a special condition that in no circumstances was any portion of this money to go for the benefit of ‘those persons calling themselves Anglo-Israelites, and pretending that the English nation is the lost Ten Tribes, which is a delusion.’ The will was drawn up with great care, and, notwithstanding the Afghan craze, there seemed no chance of its being broken. Arrangements were made to realise the estate, and the Afghan Society at once began to look out for a staff of officials, so that if it were impossible to induce any of that turbulent people to settle in the Holy Land, the money might be profitably used in supporting secretaries, which, after all, is one of the main objects of philanthropic societies. No one was surprised at the conditions of the will; but everyone was angry that so much good money should be wasted, and a fine young soldier be deprived of his heritage. I felt so keenly about the matter myself that I told Kinnish, who was the trustee, and who despised the job openly, about Jeremiah’s last hour. Both of us searched through his drawers, and in every corner of the house, to find a more recent will. We both came to the conclusion that if he had changed his mind, he would not

go to the lawyers, but that he would leave some holograph will; and we were certain that if it revoked the Afghan legacy, and left the money to his natural heir, the law courts would do all they could to confirm it. But no such document could be found, and Kinnish raged furiously. ‘Just think of it—that a man should have made such a pile in lard, and have left one hundred and thirty-two thousand pounds to a gang of crazy cadgers!’

“A month after Wisset’s death I had a bad case in his Drive, and required to make a visit every night between ten and eleven o’clock, and I passed Wisset’s house as I returned home. The first night I was thinking about my patient and a new medicine which I proposed to try next morning if there were no improvement during the night, and neither Wisset nor his house came into my mind. Next night I was somewhat relieved about the case, and as my thoughts were free, they turned to Jeremiah. What an agony it must have been if he really had repented him of his anger and had actually restored Stokes to his heritage! If he had been thinking with pride in him during his last moments and had been trying to secure him his rights, and after all had failed, and had died knowing that his fortune would go to those Afghan thieves! It was in its way the most tragic thing that had happened in my practice, and my mind—this, of course, is an important point—was fixed on Wisset and his death. Again I saw him, in imagination, sitting at the window looking wistfully up the Drive, pleading with his eyes for what he wanted, and then dying at the critical moment. I was now approaching the house, and looking at my watch, I saw that it was about the time when Wisset died, ten minutes to eleven. His furniture had been sold, the house itself was lying empty till it also should be sold. The blinds were pulled down, the house had that dreary appearance which an empty dwelling always presents, the contrast between a corpse and a living person. One thinks of the fires that have died out, and the light that has been extinguished, and the face which will never look out of the window again, and the hand that will never bid you welcome at the door. No one could say that Jeremiah Wisset was an extremely vital person, except in the lard market, or that his greeting as a host was likely to be very enthusiastic; but I had come to judge the old man by that last hour and to weave a romance of repentance and affection round him. When I looked up at the house, I did



not expect to see anything except a forsaken house with blinded windows, but in my mind I was replacing Wisset there, and as I had seen him during the last month of his life.

"Let me now explain that Wisset's house

less, and then it seemed to me as if it were shaken backwards and forwards. I went closer to the gate—not that I really thought the blind was being moved, but merely to correct my eyesight. The blind appeared now to be pressed against the glass and then released. I rubbed my eyes and watched closely, believing that this apparent motion of the blind was some effect of the gaslight, or, it might also be, of a draught in the house, which was empty, and where all the doors were open. I noted, however, that everything was very distinct, and that there was no appreciable wind.

The blind, after lying quiet for a moment, was now, so far as I could judge—for we are only recording impressions, are we not?—jostled as if someone desired to see out, but could not work the blind. I

remembered at that moment that, like many other blinds, that one had been very refractory, and that more than once, when it refused to rise, the nurse had to roll it up so that Jeremiah might secure his loved view. Of course, it was nonsense, I said to myself; but if Jeremiah had been within, I would have been certain that they were attempting to set the blind in motion. As it was, I noted in my memory how untrustworthy is our eyesight, how we have only to

imagine a thing is moving, and it moves, and to think how a thing used to be, and again it is the same.

"After another look at that upper window, I was about to leave, when . . . what is that? The blind swayed as if one were trying to get a hold of it, and then it was crumpled up at the edge. Where it was pressed together there was something white against the light brown. Could it be? Yes—so far as my eyes served me, and the light was wonderfully clear—it was a human hand, as if someone within, having struggled in vain to get the spring to work or the blind to rise, were now pressing it aside in order to look out. Perhaps you men may feel differently, and, of course, one could imagine many more eerie things; but, personally, I do not know



"He was gone, carrying his secret with him."

stood a little back from the road, with a small garden in front, that it had three floors, and the first-floor windows were those of his bedroom and his sitting-room, with a dressing-room between which opened both into the sitting-room and the bedroom, but which Jeremiah never used. On the other side of the road, directly opposite the sitting-room, there was a powerful lamp which lit up the Drive for a considerable distance and flung its light with special strength on the sitting-room window. The moon was under a cloud, and there was not much natural light, but the atmosphere was clear, and in the gaslight one saw the sitting-room window quite distinctly. I stopped, glanced at my watch, and looked up at the window. The whitey-brown blind hung straight and motion-



one that would affect my imagination more than what I saw. Consider! An empty house, blinds hanging low on the windows; then, as you are looking, a hand appears upon the blind—only a hand, white, distinct, active. The rest is left to your imagination. Whose hand is it? What is he, or it, doing there? What is going on behind? No doubt a simple explanation lay to hand: a caretaker had been placed in the house, and for some reason wished to pull up the blind. But the hand was not that of a working woman; it was a man's hand, thin, bony, strong, and, above all, white, very white. Or, it might be, a burglar had forced an entrance to the house from behind, and was ransacking it to find whether Wisset had hidden something away. But burglars don't waste their time on empty houses, as a rule; and if they do, they would not advertise their presence by pulling up a front window-blind, even at eleven p.m. For a moment I thought of climbing over the gate and trying whether I could not get access into the house. I looked up at the window again. The hand was gone, the blind was motionless; and then the disappearance affected my imagination more even than the appearance. My courage weakened and I hastened home. As I left the Drive, I looked back and saw from an angle Wisset's house, with the light of the lamp on that middle floor, and I would have given much to know what was the secret within.

"The following evening I visited my patient as usual, but having to go to another case afterwards, I did not come down the Drive. The second evening I was determined to have another look from the outside at Wisset's house, and arranged to pass there about 10.45. It was full moon, with an almost cloudless sky, and the lamps were hardly needed. The Drive was quite still, and as I came down the road, lights were being put out, for the men had to go early to business, and unless there were some social function, they went early to bed. When I came to Wisset's gate, the house was standing out clear in the moonlight, and there was neither sign of life nor motion. For a minute or two I watched, and then began to question whether two nights ago I had not been dreaming dreams. I looked round the quiet and prosaic surroundings of trim villas, neatly kept gardens, and comfortable middle-class life. In the house opposite, the last light went out; it was now eleven o'clock, and I turned from the gate on which I had been leaning, to go home,

when I gave one parting look at the mysterious window, and before my eye, as I stood there on the street in full possession of my senses and with the clear moonlight falling on the house, I saw the blind, after what seemed a brief struggle, go up, and at the window in the place where he used to sit, and looking up the Drive, was, so far as I could judge, Jeremiah Wisset himself—not as he used to sit there, confused and dull, but as he lay in bed before he died—white and wasted, longing and waiting for someone. None of us have occupied much time in describing what we have felt in giving these experiences—we have kept ourselves to what has happened outside of us; but I frankly acknowledge that I gripped the gate-post and was glad of its support. I did not think of going into the house, and, indeed, at that moment I would not have entered it for a million sterling. My impulse, even though I was outside and safe from any power within that house, was to bolt; but the fascination of the window made me look again, and this time my fear seemed to pass into pity, for the face was so troubled and appealing. Then suddenly it disappeared, as a person turns from a window to some duty in the room, and I was certain that that duty was the quest for what had been lost. The blind came down again, the house was as before, and I went home with a deepened sense of mystery.

"Next morning I sent for the keys of the house, under some excuse of looking through it to see whether it would suit a patient, and I determined to ransack it from basement to attic. One has read of the creepy feeling with which people have gone into a haunted house, and one associates anything supernatural with old castles and wainscoted walls, and secret doors, and such-like dramatic machinery. Nothing could be further removed from the conventional haunted house than No. 27, Albert Drive. It was a middle-class, semi-detached villa, renting at about £80 a year, and containing, as advertisements said, three entertaining-rooms, seven bedrooms, two dressing-rooms, and necessary kitchen accommodation. It steadied my nerves to run over the house agent's description as I stood on the doorstep and opened the front door. The interior was, of course, cheerless and dirty, as empty houses are apt to be, and one's footsteps echoed on the uncarpeted floors. But the light was shining everywhere, and there was nothing about such a house to suggest mystery. Amongst some ingenious





"I came on a packet."



Christmas literature, I had read of thieves taking possession of an empty house, and then getting up ghost scenes to frighten away intending tenants, and it occurred to me that it was within the bounds of possibility that this had been done in Wisset's house. If so, the gang would be living in the cellars, which were reached by a steep, almost ladder, stair. I brought a serviceable stick with me, but I almost wished that I had added an operating-knife as I went into the semi-darkness of the cellars. There were three—coal-cellar, washing-house, and a box-room, together with the wine-cellar—but they were all empty. There was no sign of any squatters. I came upstairs and locked the door of the cellar stairs, and went through the rooms on the ground floor, including the kitchen, and made no discovery. Next I made a survey of the second or highest floor, and found nothing there to remark, and I came to what I may call Wisset's own ground on the first floor. I looked into two rooms which had no association with him, and then I entered the room where he had died. Standing there, I had what I may describe as a vivid sense of the man who was in my thoughts. I do not mean that I saw or felt or heard anything, but only that I seemed to be in his environment. I was uncomfortable, and left the room, passing through the little dressing-room into his sitting-room. As I went over to the window, that window at which the things had happened, perhaps it was inevitable, and did not mean anything, that my sense of Wisset deepened. When I laid hold of the window-cord, as usual the blind wouldn't move; and when I seized it by the lath and shook it in order to make it start, my hand trembled—which was perhaps excusable—and I could not help looking over my shoulder. The blind went up at last, and I looked round the room where I was convinced the secret, if there were any secret, must be found. The sense of something was strong upon me, and I was tempted at one moment to clear out; but it was too absurd to be afraid, in the first-floor sitting-room of a middle-class house at nine o'clock on an April morning. If it had been 10.45 at night inside that room, it would have been another matter. I began to argue the case out along this line—that Wisset was devoted, although he would not acknowledge it, to his nephew; that in a fit of disappointment he had left his money past his nephew to those dirty Afghans; that he had repented it and, as I guessed, had corrected that will;

that he could not tell us where the paper was; and that now, if I could depend upon what I saw, he returned about the hour of his death to keep his vigil. And then I argued further that when he turned from the window with that pathetic look, it was to get that paper; and if so, it was in the room.

"I had an hour to spare before patients came, and I resolved to do what I could with that room. I hung my coat at the back of a door where Wisset used to keep an old jacket, and looked round the room. Really there did not seem a hole where anyone could hide even a slender paper. There was a stone mantelpiece, but there was no crack between it and the wall. There were, of course, no shutters—the house was too recent for that—behind which anything could be hid; the hearthstone had not been moved, and it was certain nothing would be hidden up the chimney, because any paper would have been burned. There only remained the skirting-boards and the floor, and now I noticed something about the floor which struck me and seemed to give a clue. The floor had been covered with brown paper laid beneath the carpet, and this paper had not been removed, although here and there it had slipped from its place and was ruffled. In one corner, however, it was all gone and the floor was bare; it seemed also as if the dust had been brushed away. Three boards' breadth was clear and clean. I knelt down and examined the wood, and I found that instead of a nail holding down one board, a screw-nail had been put in. When I looked closely at it, I saw that it was scratched, and evidently had been frequently removed.

"What I am going to say now I could not prove to you even if you were kneeling with me over that board, and I do not know that I am sure of it myself; but there were signs to my mind as if someone who had no screwdriver, and could do nothing with the nail, had been trying to raise it with his fingers. But it would be quite open to say that the scratches had been caused by the frequent lifting of the board; and I cannot press that point, but I have my imagination. As I became in youth the proud possessor of one of those marvellous knives which fit you for every emergency, and, indeed, would enable you to live on a desert island—which I have been careful to carry ever since, as a link of the days of long ago—I had no difficulty in drawing the screw-nail. It was then possible to raise the



board a few inches and to insert my hand. At first I found nothing; but when I stretched a little further, I came on a packet, and I must say I drew it out with considerable satisfaction and expectation. It was wrapped in brown paper and tied with tape, and I ask the hearty admiration of this company when I tell you that I mastered my curiosity, which was certainly quite as keen as any woman's ever could be, and resolved to keep the packet intact and to hand it over to be opened by the lawyer. What I may have prescribed for my patients that morning, and what I may have said to them about their illnesses, I do not care to inquire; but I grudged every moment till I was able to place the papers in the hand of Jeremiah's lawyer and ask him to examine them. It was a disappointment to find that they consisted of about five thousand pounds' worth of American railway bonds, which, for some reason we could not guess, Wisset had hidden away in this place; for this would only mean so much more money for the officials and the faddists, and would bring no inheritance to Stokes and—I was also convinced—no relief to Wisset's troubled soul. I was explaining what I had hoped, when the lawyer cried: 'Hallo! here is a letter in one of the bonds!' and I should like to have taken my pulse when he opened the envelope, took out a sheet of notepaper, and read:—

"I, Jeremiah Wisset, being in full possession of my senses, but believing that I

may not live long, do hereby revoke and declare of non-effect that portion of my will which donates the residue of my estates, after the payment of certain legacies, to the Society for the Restoration of the Ten Tribes (namely, the Afghans) to the Holy Land, and I do now bequeath all of which I may be possessed at the hour of death, after the payment of the said legacies, to my nephew, Captain Stokes, because I have always loved him, and because he has done so well in Egypt.—JEREMIAH WISSET.'

"'He might have used me,' said the lawyer, with a slight asperity in his tone, 'instead of trying to do this himself; but I fancy he hated the idea of giving in and coming round to my view of things, for I had said what I thought about the Afghans. Stand in the courts? Oh, yes. It is perfectly clear what he intended, and he only intended what was just, and in such circumstances an English judge always decides what is equitable. It is a mercy the Afghan people have not yet received a single penny from the estate, and I don't think they will need to appoint any more secretaries. Wisset has behaved like a trump, after all, and I don't see why Kinnish and I should not write to-day and let Captain Stokes know what his uncle thought of him and what he has done for him.' But for reasons which I leave to your imagination I did not say a word to the lawyer about the face at the window; I only mentioned my casual observation of a screw-nail."

## STILL THERE IS STRENGTH.

**STILL** there is strength.

Still life holds a golden prize.

Still the old lure

Endures, of the lips and eyes.

Still the sea calls,

And still (though fate holds me)

Adventures rise,

And, laughing, go to the sea.

In the far ports

The good ships ride to-day.

On the long reefs

The green seas break in spray.

The palms, and the sea!

The chapel bell, and the night!

Still life holds its prize,

Though I be out of the fight.

THEODORE ROBERTS.



# Frictional Electricity

by  
MAX  
ADELER



**I** HAPPENED to visit the accident ward of St. Paracelsus's Hospital because a friend of mine who is interested in the Flower Mission asked me to stop there, during my afternoon walk, and give a few flowers to the sufferers.

When I had arranged the last half-dozen of the roses in a vase upon the little stand by the bedside of one bruised and battered patient, he looked at me gratefully and said—

"Oh! thank you, sir! Thank you so much. And would you mind, sir, stopping for a bit of talk? I'm so lonely and miserable."

I sat upon the chair by the bed, and with my hand smoothed the counterpane, while the patient asked me—

"Do I really look like a burglar, sir, do you think?"

I hesitated to reply, as I examined his face. It was covered with bandages, but his nose seemed swollen and there were bruises about both his eyes.

"I don't wonder you don't like to speak your mind, when you see me here a broken wreck, smashed all up and not looking a bit like myself, sir. But if you could see me well and strong, and all fixed up for going to church, you'd say right off that I don't favour no burglar in looks."

I asked the unfortunate man his name.

"Mordecai Barnes, sir; and I'm a journeyman plumber, sir, with a good character, and

don't take no second place in that business with no man. How did I get here? What banged me all up into a shame and a disgrace like this? Well, I'll tell you, sir, if you have the patience to listen, for it does me good to talk who has been used so hard, and can get no attention from the nurses or nobody in this here asylum.

"Do you understand about frictional electricity, sir? No! I thought not; and well had it been for me, for this shattered hulk that you see lying here, if I had never heard of it neither! I'll tell you how it was, sir. My mate, George Watkins—and there ain't no better man nowhere, if you go clear round the globe—George Watkins is one of those men with inquiring minds, always a-hungering for knowledge, and so George off he goes week after week to the lectures up at the Huxley Institute. You know it—in that yallow building over by Nonpareil Square. And George often he tells me about the wonderful things he learned there, and, among others, he was fond of explaining to me about frictional electricity.

"It seems, sir, for you may not know it any more'n I knowed it until George explained it to me, that there's three different



kinds of electricity. There's the kind you make with a steam engine, and the kind you make with acid, and the kind you make with friction. Well, sir, would you believe—or, let me say first, have you ever rubbed a black cat on the back in a dark room and seen the sparks fly? Of course—and, sir, I know it's almost beyond belief—but positive they told George Watkins, my mate, up at the Huxley Institute, that them sparks and the *Aurora Borealis*, that you see sometimes a-lighting up the heavens, is one and the same thing! Wonderful, isn't it, sir, that Science should discover that a black cat is some kind of kin to the *Aurora Borealis*? But George says that's what they said, for the *Aurora Borealis* is caused by the earth a-rolling around and rubbing the air, just as the sparks is caused by stroking the cat's back and making frictional electricity.

"And George, he says to me that this here frictional electricity is the only kind that's any use for curing pain. The steam engine kind won't do it, and the acid kind won't do it, but the frictional kind'll do it every time, if you only know how to apply it.

"Well, sir, now I pass to the sorerful part of my story. There is a girl named Bella Dougherty that does housework for a man named Muffitt, and a mighty nice girl she is—or I used to think her nice. Maybe you know where Mr. Muffitt lives, on 149th Street, just above Parvin Street, the third house on the left with white shutters?

"Anyhow, I got to be fond of Bella, and often used to set and talk with her in the evenings in Mr. Muffitt's kitchen, and maybe have two or three other girls come in sometimes, with a few men; though I never cared, sir, for much flocking together at such times, for Bella Dougherty she was good enough company for me, just her and I by ourselves.

"Howsomedever, there was another man that had a kind of fancy for Bella Dougherty, although, in my opinion, he isn't fit to wipe her feet on, and his name is William Jones.

"This yer William Jones used to come intruding around there in Mr. Muffitt's kitchen when he wasn't wanted, and when he seen that me and Bella would rather be a-setting there by ourselves. And so, sir, one night, just to kill the time till he'd quit and go, I begun to tell them what George Watkins said to me about the Huxley Institute, and frictional electricity being a sure cure for pain.

"And William Jones, a-winking at Bella Dougherty, as much as to say, sir, that he'd

be having the laugh on me, said he had a pain that minute in his head from neuralgia, and he'd bet me a quarter no frictional electricity would drive it out. I know now what was the matter with the head of William Jones. Not neuralgia, nor nothing of the sort, sir. It was vacuum. My mate, George Watkins, tells me that at the Institute they say that vacuum always produces pain; and that was the only thing the matter with this William Jones I'm a-telling you about.

"I never take no dare, not from no man of that kind, anyways, sir, so I bet him a quarter I'd cure him, and cure him with frictional electricity, too. So he set down on the chair a-laughing and a-winking at Bella Dougherty, who set over by the range, holding the quarters, and I begun to rub William Jones's eyebrows with my two thumbs; just gently, but right along, just like stroking a cat; keeping it up, a-rubbing and a-rubbing, until at last I asked him how he felt now; and can you imagine my surprise, sir, when I saw that William Jones was fast asleep? I was skeered at first, but in a minute I seen that I had hypnertised him unbeknown to myself, and there set William Jones's if he was froze stiff.

"I wasn't so very sorry, sir, when I found out how things was a-going, although if I could 'a' seen what was the consequences of this strange occurrence, I'd 'a' seized my hat, and bid Bella Dougherty good-bye, and started straight for home.

"But, sir, of course I acted like a fool, for I'd read in the papers how a man who hypnertises another man can make him believe anything and do anything, and so I thought I'd have some fun with William Jones and enjoy a lovely, quiet evening with Bella Dougherty.

"So I said to William Jones: 'Now, William, you are a little school-scholar once again, and you've missed your lesson, and so you just go over there in that corner by the china-closet, and stand with your face to the wall and say over and over your multiplication table till you know it right.' And so, to the surprise of Bella Dougherty, William Jones went right over in the corner, like I told him, and there he stood saying: 'Six sixes is thirty-six, six sevens is forty-two,' and so on, whilst I set over with Bella Dougherty, peacefully enjoying ourselves just exactly's if William Jones wasn't anywheres about.

"And so, sir, it went on until Mrs. Muffitt she come down and said to Bella Dougherty it was time to shut the house up, and then I bid her good-night and told



William to go home and go straight to bed ; which he did, and a-saying the multiplication table all the way down the street. He would have said it all night, sir, I do believe, if I hadn't ordered him to stop and to begin saying his prayers when I passed him in at his front door.

"You may believe me, sir, that I had William Jones on my mind all night, and was a-worrying a little about him, too, for fear maybe he'd never come to. So around I goes the first thing in the morning to his

Jones to drop the multiplication table and his prayers, and to fix all his intellect in the regular way on plumbing ; and William Jones at wunst calmed down and seemed his old self again.

"Then a wicked thought flashed into my mind. You know how it is yourself, sir—you are tempted, and you are weak, and you fall, and then the first thing you know, to be sure your sin'll find you out, and there you are ; here *I* am, a shattered hulk. It suddenly occurred to me, sir, that if I could



"I was skeered at first."

boarding-house, and his landlady tells me he had been a-saying his prayers all mixed up like with the multiplication table ever since he come home the night before. She was a bit troubled about it, sir, as you may imagine, for William Jones was a good boarder, and it'd 'a' been money out of her pocket if he had lost his mind.

"So, then, I seen William Jones and knowed at wunst that the hypnertising still had hold of him. Very well ; I had no idea how to get him out of it, and it didn't hurt him nohow, so I just commanded William

control William Jones, why not turn his affections away from Bella Dougherty, who might take a fancy to him—who knows, women are so queer?—and direct his thoughts towards my own Aunt Maggie, who is a middle-aged widder and not so bad looking, and far too good for such a man as William Jones—although, to speak the plain truth, I had no objections to having him for an uncle by marriage ?

"Therefore I did so, sir, and before the week was out I heard that William Jones was plumbing in the most supprising manner,



plumbing here and plumbing there, and paying attentions vigorously, so to speak, to Aunt Maggie every evening.

"In the meantime, sir, believe me, I did not lose time in my suit with Bella Dougherty, who seemed real mad at William Jones when people began to talk about his courting Aunt Maggie; so that in less than two weeks, when Bella Dougherty heard that William Jones and Aunt Maggie had agreed to marry, I got Bella Dougherty about as good as to say, although she never quite said it square, that she would have me.

"I never knowed how it happened, sir—whether somebody waked William Jones up, or he just come to by himself; but, sir, anyhow, William Jones about that time dropped hypnertism and was himself again. Imagine, sir, how things stood! There never was a man as mad as William Jones—mad with me, and mad with Aunt Maggie, to whom he sent a cruel message that he wa'n't marrying no grandmas, and that made Aunt Maggie mad; and then William Jones set down and wrote me a letter to the general effect that whenever he met me my course in this life would be short.

"Naturally, sir, as you may believe, I kept out of William Jones's way, for I am a quiet man, not fond of quarrelling, and besides, William Jones is forty pounds heavier, sir, than I am.

"But one night, while I was setting in the kitchen at Mr. Muffitt's, having some uplifting conversation with Bella Dougherty, there was a sudden knock on the side door, and up she jumps, pale and skeered, and says: 'I do believe that is William Jones. He said he might maybe call this evening.' So, of course, as I never hunt trouble, I raised the window-sash over by the kitchen-table at the back and went out, just as William Jones come in the side door. He kept the door open a-watching for me, and so, as I couldn't get to the gate in the yard, I climbed quickly over the high fence into the next yard.

"I ought to have gone right home, sir, without stopping, but I hated to leave William Jones there with Bella Dougherty, and me just driven out; so, as it was raining hard and I had on my Sunday suit, what does I do but try the latch on the kitchen door of the house next to Mr. Muffitt's, and, finding the door opened, in I walked and set down in a chair to await what was going to happen. That was a bad job for me, sir! It isn't safe to take one false step.

"For the next minute the inside door from the dining-room springs open, and a man jumps out and grabs me and says: 'I've got thee at last, have I?' He was a Quaker, sir—a big man and with a grip like iron. I never knew a man with a grip like that. Did you ever, sir, have your fingers in the crack of a door and somebody a-leaning hard on the door? That was the way this Quaker held me. Then he calls out 'Amelia! Amelia!' and in a minute a sweet old Quaker lady comes out with a candle, and he says to her: 'I've caught that burglar, Amelia; thee get the clothes-line.'

"So the lady she gets the clothes-line, and that man he tied my hands and my arms behind my back, good and tight, and then he makes me



"He was a Quaker, sir—a big man."



set down, and he ties me to the chair, and at last he gives the rope two or three turns around the leg of the kitchen table, and says to me: 'Friend, thee can just set there while I go to get an officer!' Gave me no chance to explain. Took it all for granted; whereas, if he would have listened to me, I could have cleared up the whole mystery in two minutes.

"So then, sir, out he goes for a policeman; and the old lady sets down in a chair not far from me, and said she was sorry I was so wicked, and asked me about my mother, and if I ever went to First-Day school, and a whole lot of things. Then a thought seemed to strike her, and she went into the next room and came back with a book in her hand, and she said she would read a good book to me while we waited for justice to take its course.

"She was lovely to look at, sir, with her tidy brown frock and the crape handkerchief folded acrost her bosom, and her cap and the smile on her face; a sweet face, sir; an angel-face; yes, sir, but sweet faces often has cruel dispositions behind them. For then she told me that the book was called 'Barclay's Apology for the People called Quakers,' or something like that, and she begun to read it to me.

"Have you ever read that book, sir? It is dedicated, I think, to Charles the Second, and it begins with fifteen Propositions, and she read every one of them Propositions from first to last. Then she turned to the section, sir, about Salutations and Recreations, and she read and read and read until, sir, actually it made my head swim.

"Do you know, sir, is Barclay still alive—the man who wrote that book? Is there no way of ever getting even with him?

"I couldn't get away. I might have walked out somehow with the chair fastened to me, but I couldn't go, could I, sir, with the table tied to my leg, and particularly if I had to climb the fence? So I had to set there and be regarded as a burglar.

"But at last I *would* be heard, and I told her I was no burglar, but an innercent man; and then she looked in the index to find if Barclay had anything interesting to say about the wickedness of telling falsehoods. And then I said I was a member of the Baptist Society, and she said at once she would read Barclay on the errors of that sect; but I insisted on being heard, and I explained to her that I got into this trouble by trying to cure William Jones by frictional electricity, and she said: 'Thee has an ingenious and fruitful mind to invent such a story. Oh! that it had been turned to better devices than following a life of evil!'

"And it seems hard, too,' I said, 'that a perfectly respectable Baptist plumber should



"Aunt Maggie."

be arrested as a burglar, simply because he tried to relieve the pain of William Jones by a scientific method invented by the Huxley Institute.'

"Where is thy friend William Jones?' she asked.

"Do you know, sir, at that very moment you could hear through the partition William Jones and Bella Dougherty laughing next door! It seemed like mockery to me, a-setting there in chains, so to speak.

"He is next door, ma'am,' I said, 'a-court-ing the hired girl.'

"I will prove if thee is telling the truth,' she said, and she got up and moved towards the door.

"No, ma'am, no!' I said; 'please don't do that. William mustn't know that I am here'; and so she come back and set down again, and picked up Barclay, and looked sorrerful at me, and said—

"It is wicked for thee to have such vain imaginations. Why does thee persist in pretending that there is a William Jones?' and then she started to look through Barclay, to find if he had anything that would fit the William Jones part of the case.

"What could I do? I daresn't call in



William Jones to prove my innercence ; he was mad all over at me, and a bigger man too, and here I was tied ; and I couldn't call Bella Dougherty without William Jones knowing it. It was hard, sir, for a man as innercent as a little babe to set there with that sweet and smooth old lady considering him a shameless story-teller and firing Barclay at him, now wasn't it, sir ? Would you have called William Jones, sir, under them there circumstances, and his laughter and Bella Dougherty's still a-resounding through the partition ?

"Well, sir, that policeman was a long time a-coming with the old Quaker. I never knowed why ; but Friend Amelia she set down again and turned over the leaves of Barclay and begun wunst more to read about Salutations and Recreations, while, strange as it may seem to you, sir, I felt that I'd rather see the policeman and be locked up in a dungeon than hear more of it.

"But, howsomever, after a while, in comes the Quaker, and the officer with him, and the very first minute the officer seen me he says : 'I reckonize him as an old offender.' 'No, you don't,' says I, 'I'm no old offender. I'm a perfectly honest Baptist plumber, and I kin prove it, too.' 'How kin you prove it ?' says the officer. 'By William Jones,' says I, 'who is a-setting in that kitchen right next door, a-wooing the hired girl.'

"I was bold about it, sir, because I knowed William Jones daresn't strike at me while the officer was there.

"'We'll see about that,' says the officer, and in he goes to Mr. Muffitt's yard next door, and comes back with William Jones. I have no use for a man like William Jones. What do you think he does, sir ? Why, he looks me over from head to foot in a blank sort of a way, and then, turning to the policeman, he says : 'I don't know the man, officer ; never seen him before' ; then that low-down plumber walks out and leaves me there and goes back, and in a minute I hear him and Bella Dougherty a-laughing worse than ever.

"'I thought not,' says the officer, slipping the handcuffs on me ; 'and so now you come right along' ; and Friend Amelia looked mournful at me, and says to me she would come around regular and read Barclay to me in my cell after I was convicted.

"And so, sir, to make a long story short, I was took up before the magistrate and held for burglary, and my mate, George Watkins, that owns his own house, went my bail, and so I was let go.

"I might stop here, sir ; but I must tell

you that the follering Thursday I met William Jones up a kind of a blind alley where I was working, while he was working in a house on the opposite side. He had me in a corner where there was no chance to run, so I put on a bold face and went right up to him, and says I : 'William, there's been some differences betwixt us, but I'm not the man to bear grudges, and I forgive you !' 'What's that ?' says he, savage. 'Why,' says I, 'the whole thing is just one of them unpleasant misunderstandings,' and then I started to explain to him about the Huxley Institute theory of frictional electricity and the *Aurora Borealis*. I can't tell you what he said, sir, in reply with reference to the *Aurora Borealis*, because I'm a decent man and never use no low language ; but suddenly he jumped on me, and the first thing I knowed I was being lifted in the ambulance and fetched to this yer hospital. Was it right, sir, do you think, for William Jones to strike me foul like that while I was trying to state my case to him ? No, sir. But that's not the worst of it. Last Tuesday word came to me that Bella Dougherty had throwed me over and is going to marry William Jones on Decoration Day ! Think of that, sir !" and Mordecai Barnes turned his head upon his pillow and moaned. Turning again towards me, he was about to resume his statement, when suddenly he exclaimed —

"Why, there's Aunt Maggie !"

A woman of fifty years, nicely clad, came to the bedside and said to him coldly—

"Is that you, Mordecai Barnes ?"

"Yes, Aunt Maggie."

"I'm ashamed of you, Mordecai Barnes," said she, "ashamed of you. It served you right. You got just what was comin' to you. I wish William had banged you worse."

Mordecai Barnes groaned.

"And, more than that," continued Aunt Maggie, glaring at him through her spectacles, "I've torn up my old will which named you my sole heir, and made a new one, and left all my property to this yer very hospital."

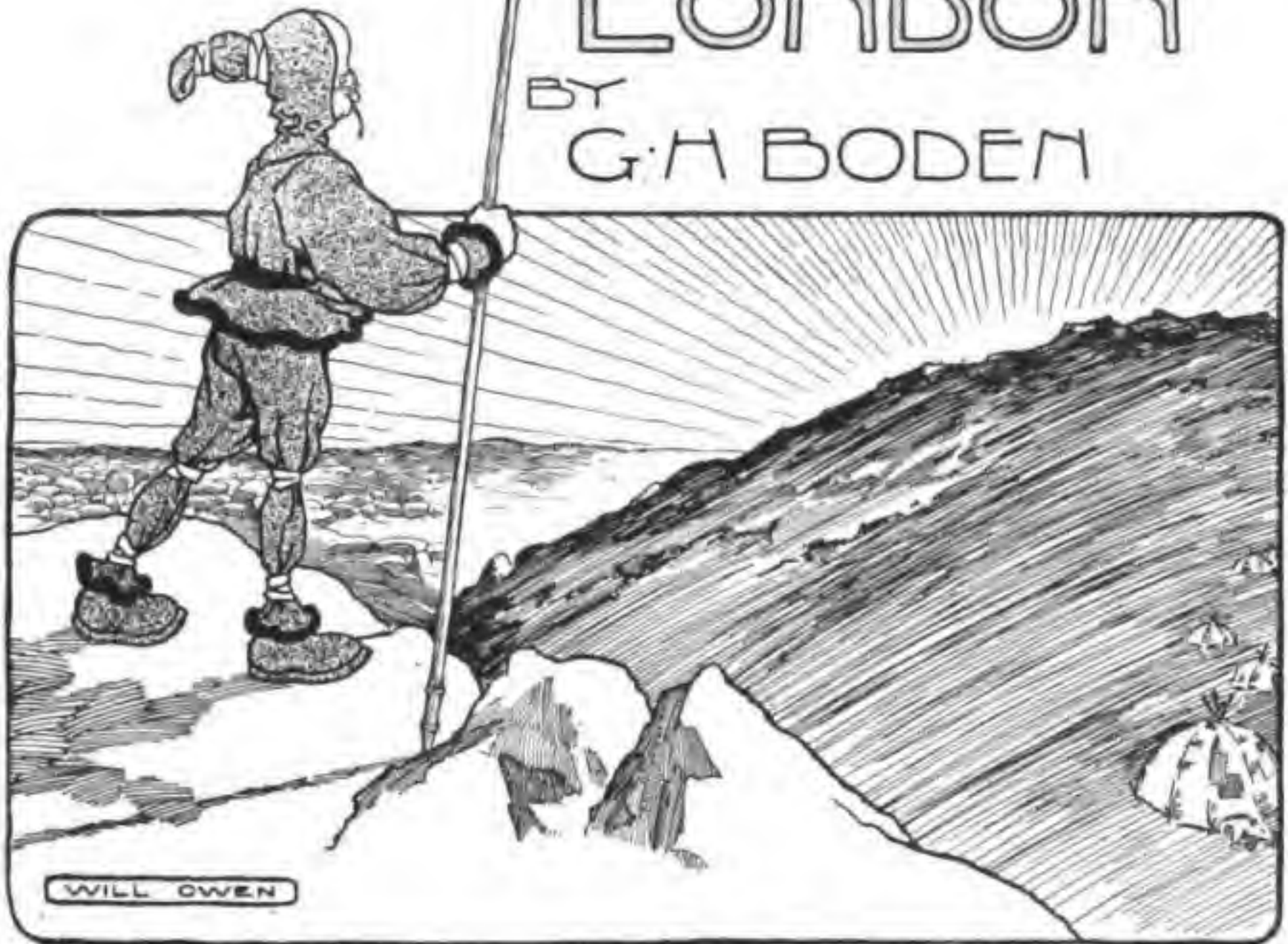
With these words Aunt Maggie walked away and left the room.

Mordecai Barnes could not speak for a few minutes. He looked as if death would be welcome. Then, pulling the bed-clothes up under his chin and closing his eyes wearily, he said—

"Curse the day, say I, when George Watkins first went to the Huxley Institute and heard about frictional electricity !"



# THE DISCOVERY OF LONDON BY G. H. BODEN



(Extract from the "North Pole Examiner" for June, 209,323 A.D.)

**A**T last we are able to welcome Professor Storry's book on his wonderful discoveries below the sixtieth degree of latitude. The book is thorough and systematic. The reader will find briefly but lucidly set out therein the principal theories on the causes of ice ages, and the former shape and condition of the world, together with much learning on ocean currents, to review which we have neither space nor knowledge sufficient. We should like, however, to point out that in a footnote on page 257, Professor Storry states that only '039 of the surface speed of a current will prevail at a depth of 2,200 yards after 10,000 years, and he gives no evidence for the rejection of the accepted ratio, which we have always understood to be '037; perhaps the printer is responsible for the change. But who is responsible for the plate on page 490, which represents the common skua in mistake for the pomarine skua?

Our concern is not, however, with the earlier part of the book, nor with the excellent summary in Part II. of the results of the researches of the latter half of the century, which have brought to light so many traces of the early existence of man in Greenland, Siberia, and the North of America. We must pass at once to the astounding discoveries in the third part. Professor Storry had long maintained that the whole of Europe enjoyed a temperate climate at a time when the Polar Basin was covered with ice, and his expedition was undertaken in the hope of finding traces of early animal life, and possibly of the existence of man below the sixtieth degree of latitude. The expedition was successful beyond the wildest dreams of the most sanguine, and its results go far to confirm the authenticity of the remains found in the quaternary deposits of Spitzbergen. The expedition followed the line of march of the unhappy Captain Baxter and



his party, whose remains they discovered in latitude 62, so that he had almost succeeded in crossing the great ice-field without knowing that he was so near to success. In latitude 58 traces of the breaking up of the ice began to appear, and the temperature became milder as the party proceeded southward, until on the fifty-third parallel they came to a stretch of clear country, opened apparently by a warm sea current, whose existence hitherto was unsuspected. The climate, though intensely cold, is yet capable of supporting life, and Professor Storry was not long in discovering signs that the country was inhabited. He determined, in spite of some difficulty with his men, many of whom were desirous of returning, to penetrate still further into the country, his perseverance being rewarded almost at once by the discovery of an encampment of natives. These people, who call themselves Anglanders, live in skin huts and display a certain amount of intelligence and civilisation. Their food is principally flesh and fish; their dress is composed of two garments of skin, the under one worn with the fur inwards, and the outer with the fur turned outwards. They are clean in their habits, are fond of their families, and seem to have few vices, though they are hot-tempered, and bloodshed is not uncommon. Physically they are strong and well developed, and the women are not repulsive. Their weapons and utensils are made of bone and wood, but they also use stone hammers, not unlike the axes of the Stone Age. There was nothing to indicate an earlier civilisation, so that it was by a pure accident that Professor Storry came across the celebrated steel knife which led to more searching investigations on the second expedition and to the great excavations which are still going on.

The first results of these excavations are common property; it has been established beyond a doubt that the Anglanders or Anglelanders possess a very ancient civilisation, unknown, indeed, to themselves, which will carry the history of the world back some hundreds or even thousands of years. Remains of a great city have already been found, and Professor Storry has actually brought back two statues—one of a man and the other of a woman, bearing the names "Oliver Cromwell" and "Aphrodite" respectively. These seem to belong to different periods, in themselves implying a great antiquity, since the dress in the case of the woman is of a more primitive pattern than in that of the man, though her face displays considerable refine-

ment, and experts say that the nose, which is missing, must have possessed great delicacy of outline. One or two tablets have been discovered, which will be invaluable in ascertaining the language, or languages, since Professor Storry claims to have discovered two alphabets. One tablet, which appears to have been placed at the base of a statue or column, perhaps to commemorate a national victory, bears the signs—

PASSENGERS ARE REQUESTED  
TO CROSS THE LINE BY THE BRIDGE.

It is too early yet to make guesses at the significance of these words, but we may perhaps assume PASSENGERS to be the name of the hero or deity to whom the statue was erected; it is unlikely that so long a word would be placed at the beginning of the inscription if it were not a proper noun. Another inscription of equal interest was carved in stone on the front of a temple. It seems to be a line of verse:—

PIT STALLS DRESS CIRCLE GALLERY.

Professor Storry is already hard at work on the first alphabet, and we may expect to hear more from him very shortly.

From representations on urns and vases, some of them of remarkable beauty, Professor Storry argues that the country must have enjoyed hot summers and cold winters, since many of the figures are entirely without clothing, while others are decorously robed. The art, so far as it is yet revealed, is of very uneven quality. Thus the plate on page 1254, representing a young man driving a chariot, shows both proficiency in drawing and a feeling for line, while the scene from a vase on page 1265, bearing the inscription—

A PRESENT FROM BLACKPOOL,

is primitive alike in design and execution. The utensils generally vary very much, both in workmanship and in form, their particular use being often a matter of speculation; such is the platter jar on page 1266, which has a stone lid capable of being held firm by a metal clamp, used perhaps as a receptacle for money or jewellery. Most remarkable of all, however, is a huge, unwieldy cylinder of thick metal with a long and narrow cavity, which is open at one end and terminates at the other in a small orifice on the side of the vessel. This seems as if it were intended for a water jug with a plug at the lower end, but it is not made to stand upright, nor would the quantity of water compensate for



the awkward shape of the vessel. Professor Storry imagines it to have been used for some sort of game, since he found close to it a metal sphere which is just large enough to roll up and down the cavity. These old Anglelanders must have been giants indeed, if their playthings were of this pattern! But giants they were not, if one may judge

with couplings of wire, as if to preserve the identity of the dead—a practice which, so far as we know, has no parallel within human experience. The skulls are of varied shape, showing to all appearance a great diversity of race and many grades of intelligence. Professor Storry suggests that the inferior skulls belonged to slaves of other nations, whose



"The women are not repulsive."

by the skeletons hitherto recovered. Of these there are not many, for in the only burying place yet discovered there is a very large number of skulls, but there are few complete specimens. The explanation of this fact is at present wanting; it seems unlikely that the bodies were burned, for the bones of the complete skeletons are beautifully preserved, and even jointed together

bodies were burned at their masters' funerals, an explanation to which colour is given by the fact that there are among them also skeletons of animals, doubtless held sacred to the dead, including several apes, a hippopotamus, and a huge animal resembling an elephant, but far larger. We await fresh discoveries for the solution of this and other problems.



(From the "North Pole Examiner" for January, 209,325 A.D.)

We have received Professor Storry's new book on the excavations at County Council, as the great city of the Anglanders was called. The workers have brought to light a great quantity of statues and monuments, which are especially numerous in the neighbourhood of the burying place, where so many skulls were found. The work of classification has been very arduous, owing to the immense number of languages in different alphabets, which Professor Storry now believes to have belonged to conquered nations, whose monuments were barbarously carried away as trophies of victory. He has wisely confined himself to the study of the principal language of the Anglanders themselves, and with this he has made considerable progress, aided by several important manuscripts, which are fortunately in an excellent state of preservation.

He has now proved beyond a doubt that the Anglanders were a highly civilised race, possessing a great literature and an elementary knowledge of science. Their religion was polytheistic, the names of eleven gods having been discovered already; these are Jove, Cupid, Nelson, Hercules, Alhambra, Tivoli, Royal Aquarium, Victoria, Windsor Magazine, and Madame Tussaud's. They had also a strong belief in spirits, of whom Hamlet and Tararaboomdeay were the chief. A propitiatory hymn to the latter is among the priceless manuscripts in the Professor's collection, which also includes the fragment of a drama representing the machinations of the evil spirit Hamlet to wreck the peace of a virtuous family; assuming first one form and then another, he gradually ensnares the helpless creatures in his toils until he has destroyed them all. The Goddess of Victory is often represented on the face of coins, the reverse bearing a female figure seated on a wheeled car, which she is pushing along with a staff having three prongs at the upper end; she wears a soft hat, through the back of which her hair is allowed to escape in a graceful festoon so as to form a crescent moon. Hercules, who is generally called the torso, was the God of Strength and probably husband of Royal Aquarium, in whose temple he was worshipped. The Anglanders seem to have been very superstitious in everything; they had a strong belief in charms. Thus we find it stated by one writer that eight ounces of rice at twopence, together with the same amount of treacle, provided that it be

properly welded together and made sufficiently enticing, will drive away the *weasel* or evil spirit. Another writer gravely asserts that the family clock invariably ceases to work when the head of a family dies; and a herb named mistletoe was also used in some undescribed way as a charm. The religious rites, indeed, are a blot on their civilisation; heavy steam rollers have been found, the use of which is too horrible to contemplate, and also a gigantic wheel on which victims seem to have been bound and whirled round continuously until they died of starvation. Others, having first been bound hand and foot, were thrown into boats, which carried them swiftly down a steep incline to perish miserably in the water.

Two historical fragments have been recovered, and Professor Storry asks for assistance in determining the exact meaning of these. The first runs—

"remitted paper. There is no  $2\frac{5}{8}$ , still less  $2\frac{3}{8}$ , except for 6 months' paper. Money itself was easy at 1 to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  p.c. for call loans, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  p.c. for week to week advances. Ease seems assured for a month at least. The continued weakness of Consols accentuates the fear about the future of money. Home Railway ordinaries were weak, with very little movement. John Jones's left off at 38 and African Gildeds rose  $\frac{1}{4}$ ."

The Professor supposes this to be the description of a battle, though the language is very obscure, and the number of killed—38 only—is very small. In the other fragment, which follows, the language is more dignified, though still obscure.

"Hocker gave a palpable chance in the slips overnight and was occasionally beaten by the ball this morning. Jinks played clean and fine all through and showed a penchant for leg deflections. He delighted us with his driving and square cutting, playing several times naturally to the on, like other left-handers. He met Grace with easy aggressiveness and constantly drove Widgeon to the boundary. It was refreshing to see him give up hanging on his bat."

There can be no question that this describes a military manœuvre, since we know that the *bat* was a heavy war-club, which was grasped firmly by the shaft with both hands and brought down with a swinging motion on the enemy's head. But the most interesting manuscript, to our minds, is a letter from a woman of inferior position to a



great magician. It illustrates in a striking manner the effect of fanaticism on simple minds. The woman relates how she had been smitten down for many years by a complication of nervous disorders, the details of which are described with evident enjoyment. She appears to have spent a considerable fortune in purchasing drugs, and it was only

skill and ingenuity, though they still used metal rails for their locomotives, and had little or no conception of road-making. One circumstance which puzzled Professor Storry for a long time was the extraordinary number of lamps. One of the first objects exhumed was a lamp fixed upon a metal column, and since that time he has dis-



"Another inscription of equal interest was carved in stone on the front of a temple."

after the abandonment of all hope that she purchased one of the magic philtres of the wizard, her confidence in which completely restored her health. The letter concludes with a touch of humour, the writer stating her intention to compel all her acquaintances to buy philtres for her.

The Anglelanders had some mechanical

covered some scores of lamps of every size and pattern. The use of so many lamps, all of them capable of giving only a feeble light close to the ground, baffled the Professor's comprehension, until he remembered that the axis of the earth, instead of being horizontal, as at the present time, at the estimated date of the Anglelander civilisation





"He has now proved beyond a doubt that the Anglelanders were a highly civilised race."

was inclined to the plane of the orbit at an angle of  $66^{\circ}$ . The result was that Angleland, lying between the fiftieth and sixtieth degrees of latitude, would have constant alternations of light and darkness every twenty-four hours. They were satisfied, therefore, with a partial illumination of their cities, having no need for a great central light such as is necessary for us, who would otherwise live in darkness for six months at a time.

Of their social life we catch occasional glimpses only. They had their meals in common, sitting in parties of three or four at small tables fitted with marble tops; each district had one or more dining-halls furnished in this way, and every inhabitant was required to contribute a certain quantity of food at a fixed computation. The common store of food was then placed upon a great sideboard, from which each diner took as his hunger prompted him. After meals they assembled in great crowds in the temples, where solemn chants and mystic dances were performed, the audience keeping time by beating their hands together. An engraving on paper of such a scene, miraculously preserved, shows us the whole ceremony—the worshippers, some impassive and others excited by religious fervour, an attendant who hastens to carry a glass of water to one who is faint, and the

dancer, who, in a costume rather convenient than elegant, is poised in a sort of ecstasy upon one foot. The faces of the people in this picture have a certain liveliness, but they do not exhibit the refinement of the statues and of the figures on the vases. We should be on our guard against interpreting too literally any of the work of these early nations. Many of their traditions evidently refer to natural phenomena. The story of the demi-god, Jack Horner, who sits afar in the corners of the earth devouring pastry, and proceeds to extract and hold aloft a single plum, obviously describes in allegorical language the rising of the sun, which would be a daily occurrence in Angleland at that period and could not fail to attract the attention of the poet. Similarly, the eclipse of the moon gives birth to the tale of the cow that jumped upon the moon in alarm at the strains of a violin played by a cat; while the tale of Mother Hubbard (on page 656 of Professor Storry's book) accurately represents the signs of the Zodiac. Happy Anglelanders, spinning your fairy tales in the cradle of the human race, groping blindly after the truth in your dim-lit streets! Well may we sigh for your childish dreams and groan beneath the weight of our boasted knowledge, which has banished the poetry of life and left us but a mechanical toy in its place!